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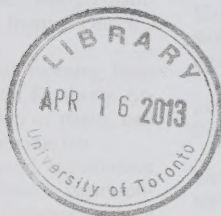
Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)



Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 8 April 2013

Lundi 8 avril 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 April 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 avril 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: With us in the west gallery this morning are two very fine gentlemen from the great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West, Mr. Barry Adamson and Earl Ashby. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park. Thank you very much, gentlemen.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Joining us this morning from my riding of Algoma—Manitoulin is Mrs. Kimberly Arnold, who is the mother of our new group of pages, one of them being Callum Arnold. Please welcome her.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm extremely proud to introduce two people from my riding of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie: Donna and Don Cormier are here from Niagara Falls to see how efficiently we operate up here in Parliament. It's a pleasure to have them here.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Although they're not here, I'm sure that everybody in Ontario is very proud that the Nepean under-19 women's ringette team won a gold medal this weekend; it defeated Winnipeg. Of course, they're from the great city of Ottawa, so I know we're all very proud that that team got the gold medal on behalf of this province.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: How are the Senators doing?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Senators? We'll talk about those guys later.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do I suspect that they're somewhere here in the gallery and you're introducing them?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I'm here and I'm very excited to introduce the fact that they won the gold medal.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you—and I'm glad to see quite well.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased to introduce trainers and workers formerly of Marineland who are here today in the Legislature.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the west public gallery, we have a number of medical students who are here with the Ontario Medical Association leadership day. Many members will no doubt be meeting them later on today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to introduce Jack Greenberg's father. Jack Greenberg is one of our pages here today, and Mark, his father, is in the gallery.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm looking forward to introducing a constituent of mine, a first-year medical student at the University of Western Ontario, here with the Ontario Medical Students Association to meet with the Minister of Health: Mathias Fricot. Matt, welcome.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce Kitty Chen, mother of Bonnie Wu, the page from Richmond Hill.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: While it's not formally an introduction, I did want to acknowledge that our own Ernie Hardeman, on Friday night, received an honorary professional agrologist designation from the institute of agrologists.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, I would like to ask this assembly to have a moment of silence this morning for Peter Kormos, who passed away on March 30.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I believe the member from Welland is asking for unanimous consent to observe a moment's silence, and if I would indulge her to accept that after we finish the introductions, I think that would be appropriate.

The member has asked for unanimous consent. Is it agreed? Agreed. Thank you.

Further introductions?

Mr. Frank Klees: My great riding of Newmarket—Aurora has been declared the centre of the universe, and I want to introduce two very special guests from my riding, Mr. Wes Playter and Todd Jackson. Wes is the director and manager of Roadhouse and Rose Funeral Home in Newmarket. We welcome them very warmly today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome Kayla Sue Marie, who is here representing medical students who will be coming to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

In the Speaker's gallery today, we have a delegation from Potenza, in the province of Basilicata, Italy. The delegation is being led by Mayor Michele Mastro, Deputy Mayor Rosella Di Tullo, chief executive officer Luca Festino, councillor Antonio Paradiso, past mayor Mario Romanelli, Giuseppe Romanelli, Michele Romanelli, Bruno Cautela, Ernesto Sessa and Vincenzo Mastangelo.

How did I do, Rosario? Okay?

Accompanying our delegation is Sam Primucci, president of Pizza Nova; Dan Montesano; and Joe Volpe, a former MP.

I would now ask all members in the House to stand and observe a moment's silence for the deceased Peter Kormos, former MPP.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ANNUAL REPORT, CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, during the adjournment, the following document was tabled: on April 2, 2013, the 2011-12 annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, in accordance with section 87 of the Legislative Assembly Act, the name of the following person appointed to serve on the Board of Internal Economy has been communicated to me as chair of the Board of Internal Economy: The Honourable John Milloy, MPP, is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council from among the members of the executive council to replace Dwight Duncan.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Before I start, I just want, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus, to convey our deepest sympathies to our colleagues in the NDP as well as his family. Peter Kormos was a man whom those of us who were able to serve with him not only enjoyed but learned an awful lot from. So, at this hour of your need, we are there with you, together.

Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Last fall, your government implemented Bill 115. For months after, and during that period, your government said it was the only way to control costs and prevent chaos in our schools. When you ran for Liberal leader, you promised you would not reopen the collective agreements imposed in this House, because there was no new money in the wage envelope. Then you had secret talks with union leaders, and you promised parents around the province that those talks only revolved around process, not more entitlements. You also started talking about the ministry envelope, not the wage envelope. Then, last week, you broke not one but three promises to parents: You opened up the legislated contracts, you caved on union demands, and your secret talks weren't about process at all.

The question is: What is being sacrificed in order to pay for these new perks being promised?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I wanted to take a moment to express my deepest sympathies to the families and friends of, actually, two former members of this Legislature: Peter Kormos, the former member from Welland, whom we have acknowledged today, and Robert Elgie, the former member from York East. Regardless of where we sit in this Legislature, I think we owe a debt of gratitude to each of these men who dedicated their lives to public service in the province of Ontario. My thoughts are with their loved ones, Mr. Speaker.

To the question from the member, Mr. Speaker, I would just say this: I was very clear during the leadership that the process that had been undertaken over the previous year had created fracture, had created, I think, a very difficult and disrespectful conversation between government and the education sector, and I was determined to rectify that. I will say more in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's estimated that the retirement gratuity alone is going to come in at about \$63 million. That's four elementary schools or two high schools in this province. That's what's happening, Mr. Speaker. Our \$63-million figure came from consultation with school boards and others, and it's an easy calculation based on the ministry's own facts.

So if there's nothing wrong with the deal that the government has now reopened and renegotiated and given more to, then why won't they—I'll tell you why, Speaker. They won't because of this: They initially said there was no more money in the wage envelope. Then, when they made the secret deal, it became the ministry envelope. When it became clear that that meant taking more money from full-day kindergarten, textbooks, technology and what have you, they said they found efficiencies. When they realized after a decade in office that not one person in this province believes they could find efficiencies, they said they found miraculous saved money. No one believes that, Speaker.

If there is so much new money found in the education budget, why is the government willing to give away the money to unions when students and boards desperately need this money for technology, textbooks—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The money that was in the envelope that was negotiated under the first agreement, that was part of the deal, is the same money that is in the envelope today.

What I said, Mr. Speaker, is that there were implementation details, there were changes that needed to be made and that the money could be moved around. There is no new money in that collective agreement. There's no new money in those contracts. The money has been moved around.

Here's the reality, Mr. Speaker: We have reopened our respective dialogue with the education sector, and I know that there are schools in the member's riding where extra-curriculars are back on track, where kids are having the opportunity to take part in extracurriculars—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess asking for order is not enough, and I'll just jump right to it. I will now be going after individuals.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. If the Premier thinks that anybody in Ontario believes that this deal doesn't cost anything, I have a power plant in Mis-

sissauga, and I'll throw one in from Oakville just so that she can make the deal. Because that is just completely false.

You can't increase retirement gratuities for sick days from 10 cents on the dollar to 25 cents on the dollar—that costs money; making sure that there are more unpaid days—that costs money. This Premier knows that there is more money being spent, but she won't be truthful to the people.

The late, great Margaret Thatcher once said, "If you just set out to be liked, you will be prepared to compromise on anything at any time, and you will achieve nothing." This Premier has achieved nothing for the residents and the students of this province. It is more about this Premier trying to help her electoral coalition with the Working Families coalition than anything else.

So I ask her again: What has this deal cost? Where is it going to be cut from in the rest of the ministry's budget?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I turn to the Premier, I'm going to ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're not spending more. The money that's in the contract is the same money that was in the contract when I came into this office.

I would ask the member opposite to talk to the kids who are practising for soccer. I would ask the member opposite to talk to the kids who are practising badminton, who are getting ready for their proms, who are getting ready for their graduations. I would ask the member opposite to talk to the teachers and the support staff who want to work with their kids, who want to work with government and who want to improve the education sector. I would ask the member opposite to go to some of her schools, look in the eyes of the kids who thought they weren't going to be able to have a track season this year and ask them how they feel about the fact that they are going to have a track season.

That's what this is about. It's about those kids in the 5,000 publicly funded schools in this province who are going to have an enriched experience because we're having a respectful dialogue with their teachers and support staff.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also for the Premier. Premier, you've sent a very clear message to every union in the public service. That message is, "Don't worry; we'll take care of you no matter what it costs."

There are about 4,000 union contracts in place or in negotiation with the Ontario government, as you know. A contract is a legal document that binds the parties to the articles in it, and by reopening them, you've hung out a giant sign saying "a contract doesn't mean a blessed thing."

So, after Bill 115 and the unwarranted hardship your Liberal approach placed on Ontario kids and their families, you spend tax dollars you really don't have, you justify what you've done by playing a shell game with taxpayers, and now everything is just peachy. Does your new policy mean you are prepared to spend your way out of this mess? Is it your intention to buy union support in the next election by telling them to just come back for more?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, the money that is in the contracts is the same money that was in the contracts when I came into this office.

To answer the member's question, the message that I have sent—the message that we have sent to every student in this province, to every teacher, to every support staff and, I would say, to people in the public sector is that we want those services delivered, that we want to work with you, that we want a good rapport between us, because, Mr. Speaker, that's in the best interests of students, it's in the best interests of patients and it's in the best interests of the people who receive the services that are delivered by the public service. I don't think that having a conflict is any way to progress, is any way to create the conditions that are good for the kids in our schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: You're maintaining that the changes being made to teachers' contracts won't cost taxpayers any additional money. Where I come from, changing formulas that were there for sick days and special leave, among other things, carries a specific value, but, hey, if there's still some spare money kicking around, you'll just use that, right? Because last time I looked, we had a \$12-billion deficit—more this year, I suspect—a debt of some \$250 billion, we pay interest of about \$11 billion per year, and that's before you and the minister raise taxes. Credit rating agencies were upside with the restraint approach your party has thrown out the window. You yourself have said that Ontario just plain has no money. Oh, I forgot: Taxpayers shelled out over a billion dollars for power plants that were never built.

Premier, am I missing something here, or have you borrowed a printing press from the mint?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We were committed to finding savings of \$1.8 billion in the teacher contracts. We have found savings of \$1.8 billion. I would have thought that the member opposite would have been impressed by the reality that there was the possibility of making some changes within that envelope.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order.

Carry on.

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really believe the underlying issue is that we believe, on this side of the House, that it is possible to work with people. It is possible to find common ground with folks who are delivering the services in our schools, in our hospitals and in public services across government.

That's what we've done since we came into office: We've worked with the people who deliver those services. This is just another example of that. Being able to have a respectful dialogue with the teachers and support staff in this province means that young people in our schools will do better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: The bottom line is that you simply cannot get away with this double-talk and nonsense. No one is buying it. Ontarians—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Withdraw.

Ontarians will make you and your party pay for what you've done. You and your predecessor imposed contracts with some unions. You negotiated with others. Then you caved in to labour terrorism and turned contracts on their head after you had screwed up the year for hundreds of thousands of innocent children. Worse, you have thousands of contracts that, by these standards, can all be reopened if the unions don't like them. What makes public service workers and your government so special and so different that the rules for every other taxpayer in Ontario do not apply? Your message to unions is this: peace at any price.

I challenge you to tell Ontarians how much their taxes are going up and why anyone should ever trust you or your government again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated please.

The Minister of Citizenship, come to order, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just listening to the rhetoric, it's hard to know where to start. But let me start here: My belief is that the work that we have done in education, the work that we have done in health care, the way that we have been able to improve the outcomes for people across the province, whether it's in education or health care—that's our legacy. It's not about a particular political interaction. It's not about a particular election. It's not about whether our party is losing ground or not. It's about whether we are finding ways to provide opportunities for the young people in this province, to make sure that kids have extracurriculars and people have reduced wait-times in the health care system. That's what it's about.

That's why I'm here. I'm not sure why the member opposite is here, but I'm here to make life better for people in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Before I put my question to the Premier, I also, on behalf of New Democrats, want to

mark the passing of Peter Kormos, who was a friend and a colleague, and give our condolences to his friends and family around the province, and to Bob Elgie as well. It's tough when we lose these people. They've served a great number of years and have done the people's work for many years. I just want to make sure that we're acknowledging their passing.

My question is to the Premier. Last week, nearly 1,000 Ontarians found out that they were given the wrong cancer medication. This is a serious error that happened over the course of an entire year and affected hundreds of thousands of Ontarians. People need to be able to trust that our health care system works and that it works well.

What is the Premier going to do to provide that assurance to people?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I agree with the member opposite that it's unacceptable that doses of these chemotherapy drugs were not accurate.

At this time the hospitals have reached out to all of the patients affected. Every patient is different. As I said last week, I really encourage all the patients to be in touch with their oncologists and to have that conversation with their own doctors.

The Minister of Health is bringing together an expert panel to review the quality assurance, and I believe that group is meeting this afternoon. So we're taking action very quickly. In addition, we will be appointing an independent third party to provide recommendations on this.

But our first concern is with the individual patients, that they have that conversation with their oncologist and make sure that their treatment is on track.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians want to know how this happened and how we can make sure that it never happens again. It's clear that we need a real and truly independent look at what went wrong here. Will the Premier ask Ontario's Ombudsman to conduct a full and transparent examination, with a clear timeline, of how nearly 1,000 people received the wrong cancer medication, and how we can make sure that it doesn't happen again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said it is unacceptable that this happened. We have to get to the bottom of it. We absolutely have to understand how this happened and whether there's a systemic aspect to this. We absolutely need to get there. The expert panel, as I said, is being pulled together. They're meeting this afternoon. We do need an independent third party to review the situation. We will be announcing that independent review.

I agree with the leader of the third party that we have to get to the bottom of this. We need an independent look at it, and we are going to be putting that in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Ombudsman's office has everything it needs in place right now to provide the systemic review that the Premier is talking about.

There are nearly 1,000 families that are wondering what went wrong, and they want to know what they can do—what we can do—to make sure that other people don't have to face these same kinds of questions in the future. This means an investigation that doesn't just look at the symptoms but actually gets to the root causes, and it means that the investigation has to be more than simply a review of quality assurance.

Will the Premier give the Ombudsman of Ontario a mandate to conduct a full investigation of how nearly 1,000 Ontarians were given the wrong cancer medication, why it happened and how we can prevent it from happening again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I completely agree that we need the experts; we need experts to look at this. The group that's being pulled together, the expert panel—Cancer Care Ontario, hospital leaders, the College of Pharmacists, Health Canada—we need people who really understand the sector to get to the bottom of this.

Everyone in this Legislature and so many people across the province have been touched by cancer in their families or personally. We can all empathize with the families of the people who are involved, and with the patients.

So it is absolutely my determination that we will get to the bottom of this, that we will have expert recommendations, and that we will get to the root causes of what happened and whether this was an isolated incident or there is a systemic aspect to this. We have to find that out, and that's what we will do.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Media reports last week indicate that the Premier is planning to move ahead with plans to implement a new corporate tax loophole that will allow Ontario's largest corporations not to pay any HST on meals, entertainment, gasoline and a whole bunch of other expenses. Does the Premier think that makes sense in these tough economic times?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Finance is going to want to speak to the specifics of what the leader of the third party is speaking about. There haven't been those decisions made, so I'm not sure exactly what she is talking about.

We're in the process of listening to people around the province, talking to them about what they think should be in the budget. I've had input from the leader of the third party, and I really appreciate that, and there are issues that we're working on that have been raised by the leader of the third party.

But the reality is that the budget isn't written yet, and we'll be working diligently between now and the day that the Minister of Finance reads the budget in the House. I hope she's here, and we will have a good discussion thereafter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Tough times mean we have to make some tough decisions. The Premier says she's open to the idea of new sales taxes and fees that are going to hit household budgets, and at the same time, she's giving Ontario's largest corporations a break on paying their HST.

The Premier says she wants a balanced approach. Does she believe it's balanced to ask households to pay more while Ontario's largest corporations get to pay less?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hear now the direction that the leader of the third party is going, and this is a question of whether we need to address the concerns of people around infrastructure and particularly transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. I believe that we have a very urgent problem in terms of the ability of goods and people to move around this region.

1100

I think the leader of the third party and I disagree on the way forward. I believe we need to continue building transit. I believe that we have to have a dedicated revenue stream to be able to fill in the gaps that have been left because of decades of neglect. We have been building transit since we came into office in 2003, in the GTHA and beyond. But if we don't continue that in an ongoing way, if we don't take the responsible step to make sure that there is a long-term plan, then we'll miss a generation and we will be having this conversation 50 years hence, and I'm not up for that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we agree that there is certainly an urgent problem that we need to deal with: infrastructure, and transportation infrastructure particularly, in this province. But the new tax loophole the Premier is creating will let Ontario's largest corporations stop paying HST on entertainment, on meals and on gasoline and other things, while families are being told that they're going to have to pay more yet again in tough times by the Liberals. This is not fair, Speaker. It is not balanced. And for people dealing with tough times, it simply doesn't make any sense.

Will the Premier commit to a balanced approach to balancing the books that starts with closing this tax loophole?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are committed to a balanced approach in writing the budget; we've said that over and over again. But part of that balanced approach is making sure that we make responsible investments in infrastructure, whether it's roads and bridges in our rural and northern communities or whether it's transit in the GTHA, transit in Kitchener-Waterloo, transit in Ottawa or transit in London, making sure that people have the transportation infrastructure across the province that they need to be able to move around.

It actually is the question, Mr. Speaker. The question is, are we willing to, yes, deal with our manufacturing sector, make sure our businesses have the supports they need, but at the same time, make sure that people can move around their region, that their transportation infra-

structure is in place and that we have dedicated revenue streams in order to make that happen.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Premier, your Liberal seat-saver gas plant scandal has finally come home to roost on the hydro bills of Ontarians. On Friday, we learned hydro bills for seniors, families and businesses are going up nearly 3%. On page 18 of the Ontario Energy Board's report, this sentence details the latest hydro hike: "The cost of the turbine purchase that is part of the Oakville gas plant cancellation agreement is included in the forecast of global adjustment costs."

Premier, can you tell us today, how much is the Oakville cancellation really adding to our hydro bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The opposition critic is speaking to the rates that the ratepayers pay. I have to say that over the last nine years, we have been investing in infrastructure, which is reflected over the ratepayers' base. We have created 11,500 new megawatts of electricity. We have created 7,500 new kilometres of transmission, at a cost of \$9 billion. We are investing in clean, reliable energy as we phase out dirty coal fuel generation.

The energy board sets electricity rates. It's stable, predictable, and rates reflect the actual cost of energy, including the cost of new infrastructure. We have clean, reliable grids that our homes, businesses, schools and hospitals can rely on.

They left us a stranded debt, Mr. Speaker. They did not invest in infrastructure. We are investing in infrastructure. It's reflected on the rate base, and we've been addressing that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham, this is the second time, and it's the same thing that I keep reminding people to do. When I get quiet, that's not the signal to go ahead and continue again.

And the member from Lambton is not in his seat.

Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Premier, I was hoping your minister would clarify if the Ontario Energy Board was referring to the \$250-million payment that appeared on TransCanada's year-end financials or if that payment is going to be something new.

Down at the justice committee, we've heard sworn testimony that puts the total for the gas plant cancellation up to \$991 million. Yet, after the Ontario Power Authority's JoAnne Butler confirmed that Oakville would cost hundreds of millions more than the \$40 million you've clung to, you sit over there and shrug your shoulders.

Premier, if energy expert Bruce Sharp and OPA Vice-President JoAnne Butler could tell us how much more than \$40 million this is going to cost, why can't you tell us the total? Can you tell us how much more is going on

the hydro bills of ordinary Ontarians, or do you need a little more time to get your stories straight?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we feel it's important that Ontarians have all the facts. That is why we asked the Auditor General to look into the cost, and he's doing that. That's why we extended the mandate of the committee. That's why the committee is having ongoing witnesses to look into the situation.

But let's listen to what Mayor McCallion had to say. "The people of Mississauga are fed up hearing all this controversy at Queen's Park over something that they wanted cancelled, the government agreed to cancel it.... Come on. Let's get on with the business of the province, folks."

Mr. Speaker, that's why a couple of weeks ago, I was in Niagara Falls to announce the opening of a new hydro generation facility that's going to provide hydro to the province of Ontario for another 100 years. Clean, reliable energy, that's what we're all about. We have a committee that's all about looking into this issue. Let's deal with the business at hand and let the committee deal with the business—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. On Friday, when the Premier was asked about the 350 workers from A.O. Smith in Fergus who are losing their jobs, she said, "The problem with the manufacturing sector is that we haven't celebrated it enough, we haven't shone a light on it as much as we should."

Since last year, Ontario has lost 25,000 manufacturing jobs, and in the past seven years, we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Will the Premier admit that the lack of celebrating isn't the problem but rather that her only job creation plan is just to create more loopholes for corporations like the Royal Bank to lay off workers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I know that she would want to join me in expressing the obvious, which is that, in the case of Fergus and the job losses, our primary concern as a government is for the future of these individuals and their families who, unfortunately, are being laid off. So it's important that all of us focus our efforts on helping these families that have been negatively impacted by the announcement of this closure.

I should add as well that the Premier, apart from being in Kitchener–Waterloo that day, the previous day spoke with the leadership in Fergus, spoke with the local member from Wellington–Halton Hills, as in fact did the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

This is an issue which is never easy, especially for a town like Fergus, which is dependent on this particular

firm, I know, for more than 100 years. It's an issue that we're working closely on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, the people of Fergus don't need our sympathy; they need a plan. They need leadership. Last month, 17,000 more Ontarians found themselves without a job, and youth unemployment is almost double that of the workforce as a whole.

Instead of investing in jobs, the Premier seems more interested in creating new tax loopholes for Ontario's wealthiest corporations so that they can cut the HST when they wine and dine. Ontarians want to see new job initiatives, especially for youth, instead of new HST loopholes for wealthy corporations.

Why is the Premier more interested in creating new tax loopholes than creating new jobs?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: There are so many parts to this supplementary, I'm not sure where you would like me to go on this.

I appreciate the fact that you were also at Communtech on Friday, when the Premier and myself were there, and Minister Milloy as well. We were engaging in—I think it was—the 11th jobs round table the Premier has had thus far across the province. We were engaging the business leadership, the community leadership and the local chambers to do exactly the sort of thing that the member opposite is asking us to do, which is to learn how the government can continue to support industries, whether it's manufacturing or whether it's start-ups like the more than 800 that are being supported through Communtech, which of course is being supported through the Ontario government.

We are concerned about job creation. We've created nearly 400,000 jobs since the bottom of the recession.

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TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister of Education. Since 2003, our government has made tremendous gains in education. Graduation rates and literacy rates are up. There are smaller class sizes, and full-day kindergarten for our youngest learners. But it is important to constituents in my riding that we continue to improve our education system and ensure stability in our schools.

My constituents have also heard in the news that we have made progress on agreement in principle with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please update the House on the progress made with our secondary school partners?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to thank the member for Scarborough—Rouge River for this very important question.

Our government has been having positive collaborative discussions with our education partners, both unions and school boards, over the past few weeks, and those have been successful. We have reached an agreement in

principle with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and the public school boards and the more than 60,000 members that that represents in terms of secondary teachers. The agreement resolves implementation concerns identified in a number of areas. Those include sick leave, maternity leave, retirement gratuity, unpaid days and local bargaining.

But it's important to know that I've been very clear that this fits within the ministry's envelope. In fact, the \$1.8 billion in savings that was announced by the previous finance minister in January is still \$1.8 billion in savings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Once again, my question is to the Minister of Education. I'm pleased that our government has reached an agreement in principle with OSSTF. It is important that we continue to work with our partners in education so that our students can succeed. It is important to everyone in my riding that no new money is spent and that we remain within the funding envelope for these agreements.

I also understand that our government is having ongoing discussions with our elementary partners. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can she please provide an update on the ongoing discussions with the elementary teachers?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to report on the progress that we're making with all of our education partners. We've actually come a long way with both the elementary and secondary teachers' federations, and both have now agreed to lift their ban on extracurriculars, which is great for the students.

As ETFO announced last week, we've come to an understanding with ETFO, the elementary teachers' federation, on a number of issues. We're going to continue to work with them this week, working towards a final agreement, and I'm confident and optimistic that we will be able to come to an agreement with our elementary teachers as well.

We believe that positive, collaborative conversations with all of our education partners are important, not just to the teachers, the support staff and the school boards involved but also to the parents and to the children.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. Last week's jobs report showed that in March we lost 24,000 manufacturing jobs. And on Friday, while visiting Kitchener, when asked about the job losses, the Premier said, "We're trending in the right direction."

I wish she'd been in Fergus last Thursday, as I was, to see the faces of the A.O. Smith—formerly GSW—workers, 350 of whom had learned the day before that they were losing their jobs.

My question to the Premier is this: How could she possibly say we're trending in the right direction when so many people are losing their jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to address this question, because I did say that, and I was talking about in general. I was talking about February, I was talking about previous months, and I was talking about the reality that since the depth of the recession, we have increased jobs in Ontario by more than 380,000. That is a very good record.

But the reality is I did speak to the member last week about the situation in Fergus. I spoke to the mayor of Fergus. We're in the process of setting up workers' reception centres and making sure that we put the supports in place.

Of course, my heart goes out to families. I know that there are some families where both of the adults in the family worked in that plant, and it's a very difficult transition and a difficult situation for families.

But the reality is that we are working very hard to put the conditions in place so that more jobs will come to the province, and that is the trend about which I was talking.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, eight years ago I stood in this House again and again and urged the government to assign the finance committee the task of undertaking public hearings on the competitiveness issues facing our manufacturers. I envisioned us working together to develop a plan for action to strengthen our industries, but the government steadfastly refused.

In the past eight years, Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Again, last week the Premier also suggested that the loss of manufacturing jobs is a myth. If the Premier had come to my riding last week, she would have discovered that the loss of manufacturing jobs is not a myth; it is real.

How much longer will our manufacturing sector bleed good jobs before this government wakes up and takes effective action?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you for that question. I have to say that, of course, the closure of A.O. Smith, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, is something which is extremely difficult for the individuals employed there and families employed there. This is a company that has been around for, I think, about 120 years if not more. In fact, my own uncle worked at Beattie Brothers, as it used to be known as, for 50 years. He started newly employed and worked his way up so he was running a form into the sheet metal.

We've set up an action centre to work with those individuals—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will consider that completed.

New question.

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Communities across this province are not being given a

chance to have a say in the decision on whether to host casinos or not. To make matters worse, there is total confusion on revenue-sharing mechanisms.

Today, the mayor of Toronto, Rob Ford, in his open letter, states that Toronto will profit up to \$150 million annually from casino revenue-sharing alone. The Premier met with Mayor Ford. He obviously thinks he has a deal, yet Ontarians are in the dark on casino revenue-sharing formulas.

Does Mayor Ford have a deal from this Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, people around the province have got the opportunity to have a say in whether they want a casino in their communities. Municipalities will make those decisions. The province is not going to make those decisions. Municipalities will, and municipal councils are required to do a consultation with their constituencies.

The letter that the member opposite refers to that was put out by Mayor Ford is what it is. I have no idea where the numbers come from; they are not numbers with which I'm familiar. You'll have to speak to Mayor Ford about where those numbers come from because they are nothing with which I am familiar.

As I said, every municipality is going to have to make this decision in consultation with its residents about whether they want a casino in their jurisdiction or not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Back to the Premier: It's very clear that this province has a plan to force casinos on communities, even those that don't want them, but there's no plan to share with Ontarians exactly what the deal is. Mayor Ford, in his open letter, has already started to look at how he wants to use the \$150 million, even though we have no idea what other communities will get. Keeping communities in the dark, as this government is doing, is not the right approach.

Will the Premier finally come clean and let communities know what will be the revenue-sharing agreement for casinos in Toronto and everywhere else?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have tried to be as clear as possible. Municipalities will choose whether they want to have a casino or not, and they will do that in consultation with their constituents—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, the member from Northumberland, the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: A couple of weeks ago, I said that the formula that applies in terms of the revenue across the province is going to be the same, that it is going to be a fair formula, and there will be no special deals for one jurisdiction, Toronto or any other jurisdiction; I was very clear about that.

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As for the numbers that are in a letter that one mayor has released to the media, I have no knowledge of those numbers. I have no way of verifying those numbers, and you will have to speak to Mayor Ford to find out where

he got those numbers from. They are not numbers that originated with us.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Grant Crack: My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. College and university students in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, like so many across the province, face significant academic and social pressures that can negatively impact their mental health and well-being. One in five of Ontario's young people experience mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and eating disorders.

Minister, you've mentioned in this House that you have been engaged in consultations with various post-secondary partners on mental health, and I'm pleased to hear that your ministry and our government are taking mental health and our students very seriously. Early identification and intervention of mental health issues are vital to giving students the help and support they need to succeed both on and off the campus.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he inform this House of what the government is doing to help ensure that post-secondary students have access to the mental health services that they require?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The fact is that while most of us recall our post-secondary days as a positive time, it is also a very stressful time for young people. Think about it: It's often the first time a young person is away from home. They're dealing with the stresses of everyday student life, including exam time. Now imagine putting those stresses together with some form of mental illness that may have just been diagnosed. That's pretty challenging.

Those students need our support, and that's why I was very pleased to announce that our new government will be investing \$12.3 million as part of a \$27-million, three-year commitment to provide support for students dealing with mental health issues. Ten projects, spanning from Niagara to Thunder Bay, have been approved in round one of the Mental Health Innovation Fund. This is a team approach involving partnerships with colleges and universities, student associations and local mental health providers, who have all stepped up to make this important program happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for your response. It's great to hear that our government prioritizes our students' mental health and well-being. Students in my riding and in campuses across Ontario believe that mental health services are an important part of creating healthy campuses, so I'm sure that they will welcome this announcement.

You mentioned that through the Mental Health Innovation Fund, students will have improved access to the services and supports that will help them lead happier and healthier lives. Students in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell want to know what kinds of programs

and services will be available to them on campus. Speaker, through you: Could the minister inform the House of some of the ways in which the Mental Health Innovation Fund will truly improve mental health services and outcomes for Ontario's post-secondary students?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd be delighted to do that. Our government has announced that the Kids Help Phone line will be up and operating, likely by the fall. That will offer a province-wide hotline to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to college and university students.

In addition to the health line, there are the 10 projects that I mentioned previously. For example, there will be a centre where all institutions will be able to access expert advice to better help students with complex mental health needs; 2,500 college and university community members across the province will be trained to identify and address mental health issues earlier; and a partnership with northern colleges will help tackle the challenges of providing support and services in northern communities and other projects that will help address challenges for aboriginal students.

These important investments will enhance supports for students dealing with mental health issues and help those students continue to learn and succeed throughout Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. I want to go over some recent developments with your government's eco tax system. Last year, the environment minister approved huge eco tax hikes on electronics, some as much as 1,000%. In January, he created a new regulation to send eco taxes on tires through the roof, with some fees increasing by more than 2,000%. But he wasn't done there; in February, he approved yet another massive eco tax hike on big-screen TVs. Now the environment minister claims that he doesn't know why there are eco taxes.

I'm seeking some clarification from you today, Premier. Last week you said that businesses and consumers need to understand that these taxes are the cost of dealing with waste. Is that still your position?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Oxford, come to order.

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm delighted to be able to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Some people just keep talking; they don't even hear that I've asked them to come to order. The member from Oxford, come to order.

Minister of the Environment?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The first thing the member will want to do is correct his leader. I know that's a difficult thing to do. You get into trouble for correcting your leader, Mr. Hudak, who referred to this as a tax, as though somehow, the Ontario government gets even a penny of it.

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: He knows that's true, so he will want to correct his leader in that regard. He knows that these fees—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: —are established by the private sector organization.

I happen to believe, and I hope he agrees with me, that they don't have to include this as a separate "eco tax," for instance, as you call it, or fee. They don't do that if there's an increase in the minimum wage, if there's an increase to the cost of transportation, if there's an increase in the cost of rent. That's simply part of doing business, and they should be innovative in including that inside that cost of doing business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, they charge these eco taxes because you signed off and allowed them to do so. I'll send over to you this letter that you signed.

Premier, I hope you can understand why I'm actually seeking the clarification. I was hoping for an answer from you earlier. After all, you yourself admitted last week that Ontarians need more clarification on the Liberal eco tax system. So let's recap. After your environment minister rubber-stamped a series of new eco tax hikes, he suddenly developed a case of selective amnesia before going on the radio. In fact, it was so bad that while he was on the air, he claimed to not even know why eco taxes are imposed on consumers and vowed to eliminate them. However, the next day, you told Ontarians that these taxes are just the cost of dealing with waste.

Premier, who should Ontarians believe—you or your environment minister, who suddenly forgot it was the Liberals who created these eco taxes?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, this is a fee that is applied to products or producers, not consumers. That's on producers, I can say.

Second, I want to say that I think the member has identified a problem—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The frustration that I'm having is that as soon as I sit down, or as I'm standing up, getting quiet, people just keep chirping. It is very frustrating. Particularly, it's the same people I keep asking, and then I get the eyes looking at me as if I'm the problem.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The fee, as I was saying, is on producers; it's not on consumers.

Now, having said that, I think the member has identified a problem. The problem is the legislation that was passed by the Conservative government in the year 2002. We are going to change that legislation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Last year the minister promised action to protect marine mammals and other animals at Marineland. The only action that has happened since then is that Marineland has sued former trainers, who are here today in attendance. They're the whistle-blowers who originally brought attention to the animal abuse at Marineland. So I ask, when will the minister take real action to end animal abuse at Marineland?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much for this excellent question. I'll say to you that in Ontario, there's no place for animal abuse, and this government is going to take every step to make sure that this does not happen.

That's why recently I launched—last October I announced that our ministry will begin consultation on a three-point plan that seeks to improve province-wide enforcement of the OSPCA Act and strengthen governance to create new regulations to further protect marine mammals in captivity and to explore options for the licensing of zoos and aquariums.

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The consultation has been going very well. We make sure that everyone who needs to be consulted or wants to give us their opinion are giving us their opinions and that we're meeting with them.

In the supplementary, I'll go on in detail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm glad the consultation is going well, because it's not going well for Phil and Christine here, for the animals at Marineland, and it hasn't been going well for over 10 years. For over 10 years, we've had examples of abuse brought forward. The Toronto Star has covered examples of abuse for over 10 years.

Animal protection agencies have filed actions against John Holer and Marineland, and yet absolutely nothing has been done to protect the animals or the humans who care for them.

Eighty-five thousand people have signed a petition demanding action, Mr. Speaker. When will the minister finally act—not consult, act—to protect animals at Marineland and the former employees who have risked everything to speak out about them?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur Speaker, on this side of the House, we believe in consultation. We believe in reaching out to the people and asking them to give us their opinion. That's why our partners wanted to meet with us. We have the OSPCA. We have the Canadian council on animal welfare. We have the Ontario Veter-

inary College. We have the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies. We have Zoocheck. We have the inter-ministerial partnership—and I can go on. We wanted to hear from them. We reviewed the legislation in 2009. This legislation had not been reviewed since the passage of the legislation in 1919.

When that party was in power, they did nothing. This party is the only party that's going to move forward to make sure we have the proper legislation to protect these animals.

AUTISM SERVICES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Last week, when members were in their respective ridings, an important day was commemorated across Ontario. World autism day was held on April 2, with events in communities across the province.

Autism spectrum disorder, or ASD, is having a growing impact in Ontario, with roughly one in 88 children being diagnosed with this disorder.

In my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, we are very fortunate to be served by the York region chapter of Autism Ontario, whose members I've met with many times.

World autism day increases awareness of ASD and has helped the South Asian community in Markham raise funds for their autism awareness centre.

My question is, in light of last week's event, Minister, can you tell me what our government is doing to make combatting autism a priority?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for this important question and for bringing forward that last week was world autism day. I was very pleased to be able to attend the flag-raising back home in Windsor last week on world autism day. The day, of course, is a day to celebrate the achievements of people living with autism and the front-line workers, advocates and professionals who support them. Together, we have broadened the range of provincial supports and services that help young people with autism develop independence, communications and living skills. As well, as our understanding of autism continues to grow and we learn more about it, we're better able to nurture the gifts of children and youth with autism.

Moving forward, we are determined to build off of our progress and make further advances for young people with autism and their families.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly clear to me and my constituents that supporting children with autism is a priority for our government. But as the minister said, we can always do more.

I've heard from parents in my riding who have questions about the Intensive Behavioural Intervention program. They are asking for more transparency in the way decisions in the program are made.

At the same time, we know that new information about ASD is coming forward all the time. As we learn more about autism, the way we deliver services must change as well.

Minister, I know that your ministry is focused on enhancing services. Can you tell my constituents what you are doing to improve services, and IBI in particular?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, again. Yes, I will agree that our ministry is very focused on this issue in terms of developing our programs and improving our programs, and I am pleased to speak to some of those changes that we've made within the ministry.

In December 2012, we established an arm's-length committee which is providing important expert advice to inform future policy design and program development. As we learn more, we need to change our programs and we need to continue to evolve with our families and our partners.

Also in December 2012, we established the Independent Review Mechanism for the Autism Intervention Program. This review mechanism now allows families to request an independent review of decisions made regarding their child's eligibility for, or discharge from, intensive behavioural intervention. We heard from parents, loud and clear, that this was a priority. By listening to parents, experts and service providers, we continue to improve autism services.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Premier. Premier, today your unwanted and unnecessary College of Trades begins its commitment to the tradespeople of Ontario who currently hold a certificate of qualification in a particular trade—that, according to a letter sent out by the chair of the board of governors. Tradespeople will now see a 676% tax increase on their membership fee from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to the Ontario College of Trades, where they will receive absolutely no new benefits.

Premier, could you give us a date and a time frame when those new members of the College of Trades will get an opportunity to vote on who will represent them on the board of governors of the College of Trades?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The one thing the member is correct in is that the College of Trades is fully operational as of today, which is good news for people in the skilled trades, who will now have a voice of their own.

I guess my question to the member is—it is going to be operational as of today; the decision was made some time ago. Why is the member still trying to tear down the skilled trades? Why does he not believe that they deserve an independent voice? Why does he not think people in the skilled trades deserve a voice like doctors have, that nurses have and that teachers have?

On this side of the House, we respect the people in the skilled trades. We have confidence in their ability to very

much govern themselves and make decisions that impact their sector. I don't understand for the life of me why the member has so little confidence in people in the skilled trades.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, tens of thousands of Ontario tradespeople are outraged by the horrible communications, by the greedy tax grab on the membership tax and by the complete lack of transparency by your new College of Trades. It is quickly becoming a boondoggle of a magnitude similar to Ornge or the power plant closures.

For example, do the regular people know that the HST alone on the new yearly membership is only \$4.40 less than the cost of the complete fee under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities? That's from \$20 to \$15.60 for the HST. Also, it is now mandatory for tradespeople to join the College of Trades. They have to join the College of Trades or they'll lose their licence. It's mandatory.

I'm going to ask you this slowly: When will tradespeople be able to vote on their own chair and members who sit on the board of governors? It's a simple question. What's the date that they will be able to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Incorrect facts in the member's question, and I don't have time in the minute that I have to address them, all those incorrect facts. I'm happy, Mr. Speaker, in debate later on in the week to do that one at a time.

I think, really, what we need to know now is why would the member in the PC Party be against enhanced consumer protection for Ontario families when it comes to hiring people in the skilled trades? I think the question that Ontarians need to know and people in the skilled trades need to know is, why would you be opposed to better protection on unfair competition in the underground economy for people in the skilled trades and Ontario families? Why would the member be opposed to empowering this sector to make its own decisions?

I have confidence and this government has confidence in the leaders in our skilled trades sector. We have a lot more confidence in their judgment than we do in the judgment of the member opposite.

That's why we're supporting the skilled trades with their own college—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health. On Friday I called on the Minister of Health to do the right thing and allow the Ontario Ombudsman to investigate how cancer patients in my riding and across the province were given diluted chemotherapy drugs. Out of the approximately 1,200 people affected, 665 were from London.

The people of my riding and the minister's riding are not hearing the answers they need from those who are supposed to be in charge, and they are beginning to lose

faith. Will the minister agree to do the right thing and ask the Ombudsman to investigate how things could have gone so wrong?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Patients deserve answers; their loved ones deserve answers. I can assure you that we will not rest until we have answers to those very legitimate questions that all of us have: What happened in this case? Why did it take a year to discover the problem? How can we ensure that this never happens again? We also have to ask the question: Are there broader cancer drug supply system challenges that have come to light in this situation?

Speaker, we have the best cancer system in the world. We have the best cancer survival rates in the world. We have a lot to be proud of. But we must be ever vigilant; we must always make it stronger. I commit to the member opposite and to all Ontarians that we will get answers and we will share those answers.

MEMBERS' BIRTHDAYS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A very reliable birdie has indicated to me that we have a few members in this House who deserve our attention. The member from Wellington-Halton Hills, the member from Simcoe-Grey and this Speaker share a birthday. Happy birthday.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to speak directly to the grade 4 students in Carol Ann Aubrey's class at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton school in Barrhaven, not too far from my constituency office. They're watching from their classroom today as students, but they deserve big congratulations from this assembly, because they're also entrepreneurs.

This Friday, April 12, the students will celebrate the launch of an entrepreneurial project as part of the Learning Partnership's 2013 Entrepreneurial Adventure. The students have undertaken research with local businesses and unemployed youth to address gaps faced by job seekers and employers through their very own hiring guide. The profits from sales will be donated to Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

This is very impressive for a grade 4 class, and for that I congratulate them, Speaker, because I think you can agree that they are going to be using the skills they have adopted during this process into the 21st century. This Friday, I'm looking forward to attending their launch with other business leaders in the community. But until then, I wanted to let them know that on behalf of this assembly, the residents of Nepean-Carleton congratulate them and want to encourage them to keep going.

So, kids, have a great day, listen to your teacher and I look forward to seeing you on Friday. Have a great day.

PETER KORMOS

Ms. Cindy Forster: On March 30, 2013, the Welland riding, the Niagara region and constituents across this province lost a friend, a colleague, a mentor and a fiercely outspoken advocate committed to the values of equity, fairness and justice.

Peter Kormos represented his constituents and the people of this province for more than a quarter of a century as a city councillor, an MPP and, finally, a regional councillor, and he represented them well. His loyalty to his constituents was unwavering, and theirs to him.

He was an eloquent orator, an intellect and well read, and he used these attributes and skills to provoke controversy and ensure good public debate. As the NDP labour critic and the NDP House leader, he served us well. His command of parliamentary rules and procedure was second to none, and his challenges were rarely overruled.

On picket lines across this province year after year, he defended the rights of workers. He lifted their spirits on their lowest days, telling them to be proud of their strengths and courage, and not to apologize for trying to have a better life for their families.

I've encountered hundreds of people over this past week, from a public school teacher to his Cub leader—imagine that; Peter Kormos was a Cub—to the organizations that he helped. And every day for the 18 months I've been here, a day has not gone by that somebody—from the maintenance and cleaning people to the Attorney General—hasn't asked me, "How is Peter Kormos?"

Peter wouldn't want us to be sad about his passing. He would want us to spend this time continuing to fight for fair and equitable access to public health care without having to use your credit card, for affordable public auto insurance, for improved health and safety, for good collective bargaining processes, for a living wage for all and for improvements to human rights. He may not be with us here today in body, but he'll continue to inspire all of us for years to come.

Rest peacefully, my friend.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Phil McNeely: Le Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est, le CECCE, est le plus important réseau canadien d'écoles de langue française à l'extérieur de la province de Québec, avec 50 écoles et 21 000 élèves.

Le 27 mars dernier, le CECCE lançait, lors d'une conférence de presse, le programme d'accueil des élèves internationaux. Ce programme est le premier de ce genre offert par un conseil scolaire de langue française en Ontario. Il existe déjà dans 20 conseils scolaires anglophones ontariens. Ce programme permettra à des élèves de la septième à la 12^e année provenant d'autres pays de recevoir une éducation de haute qualité en français dans la région de la capitale nationale.

Je suis surtout très fier que l'École secondaire catholique Béatrice-Desloges, située à Orléans, soit parmi les trois écoles ciblées pour ce programme novateur. On y trouve aussi l'École secondaire catholique Franco-Cité et l'École secondaire catholique Pierre-Savard.

Comme le mentionnaient MM. André Ouellette, président du conseil, Bernard Roy, directeur général du conseil, et Mario Lajoie, responsable du programme au conseil, ce programme permettra de répondre à la demande croissante de permis d'études d'élèves étrangers. Il nous permettra aussi de faire rayonner la francophonie d'ailleurs dans nos écoles et surtout de faire rayonner la francophonie ontarienne à l'échelle internationale.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

CAMBRIDGE WINTER HAWKS

Mr. Rob Leone: It gives me great pleasure today to inform members of this Legislature that the Cambridge Winter Hawks are the Cherrey Cup champions. This past week—

Applause.

Mr. Rob Leone: I think it does deserve a round of applause.

The GOHL Midwestern Junior B title was contested in front of 1,300 fans at the historic Galt Arena Gardens, and it was the home side that came out on top. Cody Gratton found the net twice, while Nick Caldwell stopped all 27 shots he faced to seal a 4-0 victory in a 4-1 series win over the Stratford Cullitons.

I'd also like to apologize to the members from Perth-Wellington and Kitchener-Conestoga. I know this had to be a particularly heartbreaking month of playoff hockey for the two MPPs, with the teams from Stratford, Elmira and Kitchener no match for the team from Cambridge. However, I encourage them and the rest of my colleagues to get behind the Winter Hawks as they continue their run to the Sutherland Cup.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: This past week, I visited seven remote First Nations communities in my riding. The single biggest concern of the places I visited is access to affordable and reliable energy. The reality for many of these communities is that electricity is created by burning diesel fuel in generators. This future success of these communities depends on their access to a reliable and affordable power supply, yet these communities cannot keep up with demand as their capacity is limited by how much fuel they can transport in during the short winter road season.

Most remote First Nations communities are prohibited from building more houses to ease their housing shortage, which is already at a crisis level; building new schools that are healthy and mould-free; and upgrading their water and sewer systems to address serious environmental concerns, all because of the limitations of their electricity system.

Remote First Nations communities aren't alone; communities like Red Lake and Pickle Lake face ongoing supply and reliability issues when it comes to power as well.

When communities approach the provincial government and ask to have their basic needs addressed, they are told to present a business case, which begs the question: Why do we in northwestern Ontario have to present a business case to convince the provincial government to invest in basic infrastructure such as electricity, when every other area of the province is afforded this basic right? Are we not equal citizens in the province of Ontario?

COPTIC COMMUNITY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Saturday, April 6, marked a historic day for Canada and Mississauga when Canada's Coptic Orthodox Christian community got its first bishop ever. In a church overflowing with the faithful, the air full of anticipation of this historic first, His Grace Bishop Mina was enthroned for the newly established Coptic Orthodox Diocese, which includes western Ontario and western Canada, serving over 10,000 people.

Bishop Mina, appointed by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, becomes the first Coptic bishop to take office in Canada. It is indeed a matter of pride for Canadian Copts that the community is now large enough to merit a bishop—a pride that I could see in the eyes of the community at the service. That the first Canadian Coptic bishop will serve out of Mississauga is evidence of Mississauga's pride of place in the Coptic community.

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As a Mississauga MPP, I feel privileged to represent this vibrant and remarkably successful community. I feel particularly grateful to have been invited to the historic ceremony enthroning His Grace Bishop Mina. Divine, moving and beautiful, it was hard not to feel the weight of history on Saturday evening.

I once again congratulate the Canadian Coptic community.

SPRINGWATER PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today after attending a rally on the weekend about the Wynne government's recent closure of Springwater Provincial Park. I would like to begin by thanking Dale Goldhawk from AM740, Zoomer Radio, for his presence at the rally, and Les Stewart from the Springwater Park Citizens' Coalition for organizing the event. Both Dale and Les have been integral in keeping pressure on the Wynne government to allow the Springwater park to remain open.

The loss of this unique resource in our community has been immense. In fact, in recent months I've been inundated with emails, letters and petitions from concerned residents and local councils who share this senti-

ment. For example, here's an excerpt from one of the many letters I have received.

Carol from Wasaga Beach writes: "This park is a gem that we the people of Ontario cannot afford to lose. The fact that this park is the only provincial park ... with a wildlife sanctuary for injured or orphaned animals native to Canada, it houses a World War I cenotaph dedicated to the Vespra Boys, and is located just outside Barrie (one of the fastest-growing cities in Ontario) should be reason enough to overturn your decision!"

I'm pleased that the new minister, David Orazietti, recently gave me a phone call and said he supports reopening the initiative to explore options that will allow the park to remain open. I look forward to these discussions in the weeks ahead, and I know the minister will keep his word to keep an open mind. In the meantime, as the park is now closed, I urge the government to reconsider their decision and give us more time to come up with all the available options.

MAPLE LEAF FOODS

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's time to talk about jobs and to welcome and recognize one of western Mississauga's newer corporate citizens, Maple Leaf Foods, now located in our ever-more-vibrant Meadowvale neighbourhood. Maple Leaf is Canada's largest meat, meals and bakery company, with 2011 sales of \$4.9 billion and operating earnings of \$259 million. We know the firm through such brands as Dempster's, Schneiders, Olivieri, Tenderflake and, of course, Maple Leaf.

Like many leading Ontario companies, Maple Leaf got smarter and more efficient as the value of the Canadian dollar rose against the US currency and as the world coped with the recent recession. Like other leading Ontario companies, they've become more competitive, less complex and more export-oriented. In Ontario, Maple Leaf operates 38 plants with 8,900 employees and \$2.8 billion in direct economic benefits. Maple Leaf has transformed itself by closing older and outdated facilities and opening new state-of-the-art centres like the \$12-million ThinkFOOD! centre in Meadowvale, where the company learns what its consumers in retail and in the food and restaurant business think and want. With upgrades in capital spending planned or in progress across Ontario, Maple Leaf is another Ontario company building our province, our communities, and our citizens' high-value careers.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Last week my colleagues and I were out meeting with farmers. We heard they are frustrated that once again this government has implemented a policy that negatively impacts them, with no consultation. This time it's the massive increase in eco fees for agriculture tires. The government approved fees that will download millions onto farmers, with no consultation or understanding of the impact on our rural economy. The fees on a single tire can be over \$1,000.

I've been contacted by hundreds of farmers concerned about the costs. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture said, "It's a drastic price increase that will be detrimental to Ontario farm businesses and the rural communities they support. The increase is all the more devastating because it has come as a surprise. There were no opportunities for the public" or the OFA "to comment on these increases."

We launched a petition which is being signed by people across Ontario. We put forward proposals to lower the cost. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is meeting with the OTS. Why isn't the government taking action? The Premier acknowledged the problem weeks ago. She could have fixed it, but instead, on April 1, the new fees went into effect, and every day farmers across Ontario are getting hit with these massive fees.

Our farmers need a Minister of Agriculture who will stand up with them. They need a government that will consult with them before making policies that impact them and cost them millions of dollars. And they need these massive increases in the cost of agriculture tires reversed.

I thank you very much for allowing me to bring this statement forward.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kitchener–Conestoga has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment concerning eco taxes. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of bills? Introduction of bills? Finally, introduction of bills.

Motions?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Slow off the handle. You forgot you did all that writing, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for recognizing me.

CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (MONEY TRANSFERS), 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR (TRANSFERTS DE FOND\$)

Mr. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 with respect to money transfers / Projet de loi

47, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur en ce qui concerne les transferts de fonds.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was paying attention this time.

This bill essentially has three components. It seeks to limit the fees that money transferors may charge to a consumer to 5%, to cap those fees at 5%. It also requires disclosure of all the fees that are being paid—whether they're transfer pays, whether they're fees, whether they're exchange rate fees—to require transparency; and also to have an enforcement component.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that ACORN of Canada has been integral to making this bill possible. They've seen that many communities across Ontario are sending money internationally, and much of the money they're sending is caught up in fees. They're not being able to send all that money to those who need the money in, often, developing countries.

This is a bill that would seek to protect those consumers, to add some level of fairness, to ensure that the folks who are worse off in the world are receiving the funds that they're entitled to.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

I will offer another round: introduction of bills?

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, today, we mark Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day. This is a day to remember the more than six million Jews who were killed in the death camps and ghettos of Nazi-occupied Europe. It's a time for us to stop, to mourn and to remember the men, women and children who perished. We think of the families that were torn apart, and the talents, the hopes and the dreams that were lost when they perished.

But our memory of them, Mr. Speaker, and our memory of their struggle did not perish. Holocaust Memorial Day is a time to pay tribute to all those who fought, all who suffered and all who died.

We think, too, of those who survived, those who emerged from the darkness, who bore witness and who told the world of all that had happened there. Through them, we learn not only of the horror but also of the bravery of resisters. We also remember and honour today the righteous Gentiles or the Righteous Among the Nations, who, acting on their own initiative, risked their lives, their freedom and their safety to save Jews during the Holocaust—not because they had to, but because it was the right thing to do.

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Mr. Speaker, this month also marks the 70th anniversary of the Jewish uprising in the Warsaw ghetto of Poland. Yesterday, I was honoured to attend the Yom ha-Shoah Holocaust commemoration with a number of my colleagues in Vaughan. There, we heard a very difficult but also moving recount of that uprising from a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto.

On April 19, 1943, a group of Jewish fighters—men, women, boys and girls—stood up against their enemy. For nearly one month, they fought heroically and magnificently against insurmountable odds. In the end, they fought with dignity and died with honour. The Warsaw ghetto uprising was the first urban uprising in German-occupied Europe, and news of their brave resistance inspired others as it spread. They were an inspiration then and remain so today for all who fight tyranny and oppression.

It was this same strength of spirit that helped Holocaust survivors rebuild their lives once the war was over. Today, we give thanks to those survivors who made their way to Ontario and to Canada and who have, through their many contributions, enriched the cultural fabric of our great province. Ontario has gained immeasurably through the richness of their faith and heritage and through all they and their families have contributed to our communities, our economy and our society. Their heritage is our heritage. Their struggle is now a part of who we are and who we aspire to be.

We stand together today as Ontarians and indeed as members of that intrinsic community called “humanity” with a vow to never forget. We must continue to fight anti-Semitism and racism and hate of any form to be champions of human dignity and human rights for all. We must defend the vulnerable, foster tolerance and compassion, and strive for justice and peace for everyone. And we must always remember those who died in the Holocaust, those who stood in resistance, those who fought for life and humanity and bore witness to evil.

So on this Yom ha-Shoah, we pledge never to forget—never to forget the victims or the lessons of the Holocaust. We join together with the Jewish community and with all of humanity to make that simple but enduring pledge: Never again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Today, the province of Ontario joins with the state of Israel and many other countries around the world in officially observing Holocaust Memorial Day or Yom ha-Shoah. Yom ha-Shoah, the day of remembrance for the victims of the Holocaust, compels us to consider not only the nature of evil, but the determination of people everywhere to triumph over it.

Today in Ontario and throughout the world, Jewish communities recall both the unbelievable tragedy of genocide, but also the courageous efforts of ordinary people to resist, to rescue and to record the truth so that the world will never forget.

We honour the memories of six million Jews and millions of other innocent victims whose lives were

tragically taken during the Holocaust over 60 years ago—those who saw the horrors of deportation, ghettos, the concentration camps that witnessed humanity at its very worst—and know too well the pain of losing loved ones to senseless violence.

As we reflect on the absolute horror that was inflicted on so many innocents, we pay tribute to the incredible strength and determination of those who survived. We also recognize the courage of those who provided refuge at tremendous risk to their personal safety. The Holocaust profoundly transformed our perception of humanity and what humanity is capable of. It is our duty to remain vigilant against intolerance, racism and hatred, and ensure that such a tragedy is never repeated.

While this is a time for mourning and reflection, it is also a time for action. On this day, we recall the courage, the spirit and the determination of those who heroically resisted the Nazis, exemplifying the very best of humanity. Like these courageous individuals, we must commit ourselves to resisting hate and persecution in all its forms. By remaining vigilant against those who seek to perpetuate violence and murder, we honour those we lost during one of the darkest periods in human history, keeping their memory alive for generations to come.

Despite the fact that genocides have occurred in the world's history, the tragedy of Yom ha-Shoah will always stand apart as one of humanity's greatest shames. Today we see the faces of Holocaust survivors and read in their eyes what God gives us the strength to comprehend.

Mr. Speaker, in 1998 I had the honour and privilege of introducing Bill 66 at Queen's Park, establishing Holocaust Memorial Day in Ontario, the first such time an act was enacted outside of Israel anywhere in the world. Please allow me to once again thank each and every person who helped in those efforts each and every step of the way. By establishing this day of commemoration, we provide an opportunity to reflect on and educate others about the enduring lessons of the Holocaust. This day shall also provide an opportunity to consider other instances of systematic destruction of peoples and human rights issues around the world.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the entire PC caucus, thank you for allowing me to add my voice to today's proceedings. Our thoughts and prayers today are with the Jewish community and indeed all those throughout the world who are threatened on a daily basis.

May we never forget.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege and honour to stand today to talk about Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom ha-Shoah. Yesterday being Sunday, I was reading the local newspaper, Beach Metro News. I opened it up to see events and things around the Beach, and I saw a tiny ad for the Beach Hebrew Institute and that they were going to be opening their doors and they were going to have a Yom ha-Shoah. Although I have been to Yom ha-Shoahs before in other places, it was the first time I had ever seen one advertised in that location. Of course, I went there to be with my friends, with my neighbours, with people I know from the Beach.

It was a very small institute—a synagogue, a very tiny building. Oftentimes, they have difficulty finding the 12 men or so that they need to hold a service. There were about 20 people there, the families of survivors. There were no actual survivors there. The people there were much too young to have survived the Holocaust. One after another, they stood up and told their stories.

A young woman talked about families that she and her family had known in Europe. She talked about a woman hiding out with her young daughter and how she was protected for over a year in a household, only to be discovered at the end and shipped off to her death. Her daughter was never heard from again, nor the woman. Even to this day, the family wonders what became of her, although they probably know what did.

There were poems of horror; there were poems about the camps and poems about the survivors.

A young woman who was brought up in London talked about the air raids and how, even in the midst of all the bombing that was taking place, she was much, much safer than those who were in Europe.

A young woman, as well, stood up and read a newspaper. It was the first newspaper published by people who were in the camps, after they were liberated. It was entirely in Yiddish, and she was having a hard time getting it translated these days. But she did translate a couple of paragraphs for the audience about what life was like in the camps.

At the conclusion of all of that, of course, there were the customary prayers, the Kaddish; the lighting of six candles, each one representing one million souls who perished—and we all, in unison, said, “Never again.”

It was a very moving ceremony, although a very small one. The Jewish community in Beaches—East York is very small.

People talked, both during the ceremony itself and after, about the troubling aspects of what happened back in the 1930s and 1940s in Europe and, in fact, some of the fears we have of things that we are seeing reoccurring today in parts of Europe and around the world with the rise of neo-Nazism and xenophobia.

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We need to be true to our words—and I committed to them that we would—to always remember, never again: never again places like Rwanda, Cambodia or the former Yugoslavia; never again to the sectarian violence in so many parts of the world that we read about each and every day. We have an opportunity as a society to stand united. We have an opportunity to speak about racism and against racism and anti-Semitism. We have an opportunity to uphold the dignity of all peoples and to work for justice. We owe it to the six million people who died. We owe it even more to those who survived and came to Canada and elsewhere in the world, who built our societies and who have given us the living legacy of knowing the brutality of those times. We owe it to them to make sure it never happens again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their thoughtful and heartfelt comments.

PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for petitions. I'm going to mix it up: The member from Simcoe—Grey.

SPRINGWATER PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we oppose the termination of the operating budget for Springwater Provincial Park in Springwater township on March 31, 2013;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We ask that the park remain operating and facilities such as the animal sanctuary, cabins/shelters, playground equipment and ground maintenance remain intact and operating.”

I agree with the petition, and I will sign it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Cindy Forster: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Re: Dr. Kevin Smith's Niagara Health System report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care proposed changes to the hospital services in south Niagara.

“Whereas the residents of south Niagara will not have equal, fair, safe and timely access to in-patient gynecological, obstetrical and pediatric services due to distance; and

“Whereas excessive travel times and lack of public transportation for residents in south Niagara will put patient safety at risk; and

“Whereas, if implemented, Dr. Smith's recommendations and the proposed location of a new south Niagara hospital in Niagara Falls is approved, a two-tier health system in Niagara will be created, where north Niagara will be overserved and south Niagara will be underserved in relation to the safe and timely access to health and hospital care; and

“Whereas if hospital services including in-patient gynecological and mental health, and all obstetrical and pediatric services from the Welland hospital site and the Greater Niagara hospital site will be relocated to the new north Niagara St. Catharines site in 2013, it will undermine the continued viability of these two sites as full-service hospital sites;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to maintain existing services at the Welland hospital site and the Niagara Falls hospital site and that no services are to be moved until this new south Niagara hospital is open and request that any approval for a new Niagara south hospital include a site that is centrally located in Welland.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature and send it with page Bonnie.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, presented to me by the Eringa family from my great riding of Oxford.

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco-fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco-fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

I affix my signature to this petition. Thank you very much for allowing me to present it, Mr. Speaker.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco-fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco-fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-

the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

I support it, will sign my name and send it with page Annie to the Clerk's desk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until an independent third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines; and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government place a moratorium on the approval of any wind energy projects and a moratorium on the construction of industrial wind projects until further studies on the potential adverse health effects of industrial wind turbines, their effect on the environment, the potential devaluation of residential property are completed; and that any industrial wind projects not currently connected to the grid be cancelled."

I agree with this petition and I'll affix my name to it.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. John Yakubski: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco-fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco-fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

I support this petition. I affix my name to it and send it to the table with Callum.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas local citizens' wishes regarding the development of wind turbines in their vicinity are not being properly consulted or informed;

"Whereas local government decision-making in regard to wind turbines has been rendered powerless;

"Whereas wind turbines have been divisive in other Ontario communities;

"Whereas electricity costs in Ontario have escalated since the introduction of the Green Energy Act;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that no further development of industrial wind turbines take place until citizens are properly consulted and informed, and local government processes are respected."

This is from the residents of Plympton-Wyoming. Thank you, sir.

1340

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition regarding the Drive Clean program, and I want to thank Larry Moore of Tottenham, in my riding, for sending it to us.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging

of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I agree with this petition, and I'm happy to sign it.

CATARACT SURGERY

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to thank Ron Struthers of Huntsville, who gathered 500 names on this petition. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has identified cataract surgery to be a key health service for which it aims to reduce wait times under its Wait Time Strategy; and

"Whereas the current wait time for cataract surgery at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare exceeds the provincial wait time and the provincial target under the Wait Time Strategy; and

"Whereas demand for health services like cataract surgery is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario maintain adequate funding levels to Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare for cataract surgery procedures so that it may reduce wait times for cataract surgery."

Mr. Speaker, I support this and give it to Jack.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the WSIB has mandated that effective January 1, 2013, all independent contractors and small business owners operating in the construction industry must have WSIB coverage;

"Whereas many of these business owners have their own private workplace insurance that in most cases is more affordable, more efficient and provides more extensive coverage;

"Whereas mandatory WSIB premiums add significant costs to small businesses and adversely affects their growth prospects and in some cases their solvency;

"Whereas the government provided minimum notice about the change to businesses with WSIB sending out an official letter dated November 25, 2012;

"Whereas at a time when Ontario is facing a jobs crisis with 600,000 people unemployed, the government and its agencies should not be discouraging private sector job creation and growth by levying additional, unnecessary costs;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the Minister of Labour to issue an order in council eliminating the requirement that mandates compulsory WSIB coverage on all independent contractors and small business owners in the construction industry."

I support this petition, as do all the residents of Elgin-Middlesex-London, and affix my signature to this and hand it to Annie.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the residents of Clearview township and neighbouring townships, oppose the wpd Canada Fairview wind project on Fairgrounds Road and all wind energy projects in Clearview township; and

"Whereas we support the petition of mayors and councillors from 80 municipalities, farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, which petition requested that the province place an immediate moratorium on all wind projects until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health, amongst other things; and

"Whereas wpd Canada's Fairview wind project violates the OLS airspace and usability of registered aerodromes in Clearview, including Collingwood Regional Airport and Stayner field, and, and wpd Canada's draft renewal energy approvals reports do not recognize these impacts or the jurisdiction of the government of Canada; and

"Whereas wpd Canada is seeking final approval from the province for the Fairview wind project prior to completion of the federal Health Canada study and prior to federal actions to protect aviation safety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario agree and accept that until the federal health study is completed and federal aeronautical zoning is in place, that it will immediately take whatever action is necessary to give full effect to a moratorium on all wind turbine development in Ontario, including all projects for which final approvals have not been given."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES
(SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 28, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / *Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member from Beaches-East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do believe it is my opportunity at this point, so that's why I stood. I understand that we have 10 minutes as of now, so I would like to get on with it, because that's not a long time.

Originally, I had planned to talk about the merits—or perhaps, more so, the lack of merit—to this particular bill. In doing some research around it, it became apparent to me that this bill cannot and should not continue as it is currently written.

We parliamentarians have a choice to make in each and every bill: We can oppose it or we can try to change it. Especially if you're on the opposition side, those are really the only choices you have. So we've made a decision within our caucus to simply try to make the changes to actually make the bill of some value because, as it's presently constituted, it has very little merit to it at all.

The best thing about having a minority government is that changes can be made. The government has to listen to the opposition, at least in committee. I explained to some people who came into my office today what they thought were the rather arcane rules of the Legislature. If you go to a city council meeting, there's a motion that passes or doesn't pass; it's over. But if you come to the Legislature, you have first reading, which is just to announce what it's all about; you have second reading, which is approval in principle to send it off to committee; you have committee hearings and you have changes to the legislation, and then it comes back for a third and final reading.

I was explaining all of this to the two people who came to my office this morning, but I told them that it works. It only works in a minority government, and they agreed with me because they have been before this government in the last number of years on a couple of issues and they found the government unwilling or unable to make the changes that were requested because they had a majority then, and everything that the public or the opposition had to say, no matter how valuable, was generally not listened to. Things have changed.

I'm going to direct the rest of my speech to my Conservative colleagues because I don't know whether you're going to oppose this bill or not, but probably it's going to go into committee. If it goes into committee, we have an opportunity to make this bill something that it should be, as opposed to what it is. We all know that this bill has very little substance to it. We all know that, as it's presently constituted and has been constituted for months and months and months, through prorogation and brought back, there's nothing of any substance in this bill that's going to help the people of Ontario.

We believe that a couple of things have to happen and must happen when this goes to committee. If it doesn't happen in committee, I don't intend to vote for it at third reading, and I don't think anybody else in this place should either.

The first thing that has to happen is that we have to make sure that the Ombudsman has oversight. If the Ombudsman had had oversight from the beginning, we wouldn't be in the mess we are in today with Ornge and this government wouldn't have to be wiping those slices of orange off their face every single day when the committee meets. Every single day there's a new revelation of who knew and when they knew or what they knew, and every single day this government looks worse and worse around this entire file.

1350

The second thing we need to do is that we need to have the ability to have Ornge brought before Government Agencies. That's a committee that can call various ministries or parts of ministries before it in order to discuss what their mandate is and what they're doing. Many, many government agencies are brought before the committee, and some of the most valuable things I've learned in my last 12 years here have been before the Government Agencies committee, as when groups such as MPAC are brought forward to talk about tax rates. The Ontario Municipal Board was once brought forward and made to explain their rationale for being and why they were doing what they're doing.

We believe that a group like Ornge should be subject to the same kinds of questions from members of the Legislatures. That's not contained within the body of the four walls of this bill, and that cannot continue.

We also think that this bill must have words in it that force the ministry to examine its own funding role for Ornge and literally for everything else, because it's not in here. The bill contains very little.

Last but not least, we think that within the body of the bill there should be an assurance that all future governments are held accountable—not what we have seen under Ornge since this began. What has happened is that the minister has said repeatedly that she didn't know, then she said she found out and fired the staff, then she said, "No, they all quit," and all the other things in order to try to get around that accountability.

As I said, every day there seems to be some new problem surfacing in committee about Ornge, and the answer is not what is contained within this bill. The answer is for all of us in this Legislature to seize the opportunity, when and if this goes to committee, to change the bill, because there is no sense having a bill on a government agency that's been dissected from top to bottom and is being resected, if there is such a word, back together again every single day. We know the problems of Chris Mazza. We know the problems of Mr. Apps. We know the problems of people who were putting their hand collectively in the pockets of taxpayers. We know the shenanigans about buying helicopters in Italy—

Interjection: And speedboats.

Mr. Michael Prue:—and speedboats. We know all of those things. This bill, had it been in existence, would not have helped any of that. It would not have helped a thing.

So this bill, in and of itself, is not going to prevent future Ornges, because this bill is confined to the Ornge group itself. It's not about all the other government agencies, as it should be. It's not even about the Ministry of Health and the power the minister has over the many, many agencies that report directly to her. It's about one small group that has been dissected. I can't even believe we're still asking all those questions, but I don't blame us for asking them, because the answers as they're coming out are so perverse that it's hard to believe this minister or this ministry had any accountability whatsoever over the money that was being spent throughout the time.

Virtually nothing has changed from when the bill was first introduced. We all need to remember when this bill was introduced in this Legislature to much fanfare by the minister about how this was going to solve all the problems at Ornge, how she was going to get a handle on all of this, how things were going to be so much better. Then we got prorogued, and the bill died. The bill was there for four months with absolutely nothing happening to it, only to be resurrected and brought back to this Legislature after four months.

The only change we saw within the body of the bill that amounted to anything was that Ornge was finally going to be subject to freedom of information. We in this House know freedom of information. You know what you get when you make a freedom of information request from this government? You get stalling, you get weeks and months that go by, you get asked to pay up front monies you don't have in order to try to get a few pieces of paper, and when you finally get them, everything's redacted; everything's blacked out. You don't know anything. You don't even know why you sent for it. That's the reality.

This is what they're put in here. This is the only change. It's now subject to freedom of information, which means you're going to get redacted documents. That is of no great consequence to the people of this province. That, in and of itself, although the government will stand up and say this is a good thing, is not really what the opposition or the people of Ontario are looking for. We've had four wasted months. A lot of bills needed to come forward; this was but one of them.

Now we have other things that we're worried about. If I can digress just for a second here, Mr. Speaker, the estimates committee continues to meet, and we're not even constituted for the upcoming estimates session. We're still meeting on the estimates from the last time, although the report has already been given, because part of the problem is, again, the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health has a number of documents—we've heard, up to a million pages—which have been demanded by the opposition and which have now been produced, but they haven't been put on the keys yet to put into the computer. We're waiting for those. Estimates

has to meet again tomorrow because they're not forthcoming. This government makes everything be dragged out—dragged and dragged and dragged.

That's why we in the opposition need to send this to committee; it's why we need to send this bill for radical and major changes. The people of Ontario have an unqualified right to find out what's going on inside of government. They have an unqualified right to find out how their tax money is being spent. The members of this Legislature need to do everything in their power to make sure that right is there. I ask especially my colleagues in the Progressive Conservatives, if this goes to committee, to do everything you possibly can to open this up so that we can find out how the government is working on the inside and to make the changes the people of this province demand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Certainly, it's good to rise in this House on Bill 11 yet again. I do agree with some of what the member for Beaches–East York said. Certainly, I think we're all very anxious to get this bill into committee. As our Premier and as our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care have said repeatedly, we're most interested in the ideas the opposition has to bring forward, to perhaps improve and strengthen this bill.

However, I would like to remind the member for Beaches–East York what exactly is in Bill 11, because it is, as I'm sure you know, modelled on the Public Hospitals Act, and I've never heard you particularly object to the Public Hospitals Act.

Like that particular piece of legislation, Bill 11 does provide cabinet with the power, upon the recommendation of the minister, to appoint a supervisor to exercise the powers of the board, officers and members and other corporate powers of an air ambulance service provider—surely an important step forward. It also gives cabinet the power, upon the recommendation of the minister, to appoint one or more provincial representatives to the board of an air ambulance service provider. It would give the minister the power to issue directives to an air ambulance service provider. It would give the government the ability to include provisions in an agreement between Ontario and an air ambulance service provider. Furthermore, it provides cabinet with the power to appoint a special investigator to investigate and report on certain activities of an air ambulance service provider.

These are all strong measures. I think they're extremely important. I cannot agree at all that there's nothing in this bill. There are new and, I'd say, extremely strong powers very much in parallel to the Public Hospitals Act, which I think we would all agree has provided a measure of safety and oversight for the government in these essential institutions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's great to be here in the House again, back to work. I want to wish you a happy 50th birthday, Mr. Speaker. You look very good in the

chair. I only hope I can aspire to look as good as you at 50, sir.

I will be addressing Bill 11 here later on, when I have some more time to actually peel back the onion, if you will, and show exactly how toothless this piece of legislation is. This is, echoing the member from Beaches–East York, a lot of fluff. This is what we've come to know of many of the Liberal pieces of legislation that are brought forward, Mr. Speaker.

1400

It's a shame that we're actually presented with this piece of legislation. I do agree with the member from Beaches–East York: This will eventually make it to committee. We're going to have to do some serious overhaul of this bill. In fact, when it comes out of committee—if it ever does come out of committee—it won't even look like the same piece of legislation that went to committee. That's how much work has to be done on this piece of legislation if we're going to prevent the scandals at Ornge under this government and this health minister from continuing.

We're going to have to fillet this piece of legislation like a well-caught fish and gut it and make sure that it actually has some bone to it. We'll talk about that a little later, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In reference to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, I appreciate her statement; however, what she did say in her statement was that it was up to the minister. Well, we can't even get the minister to do an Ombudsman on anything around here without a major fight—and we still haven't succeeded, I might add. So to leave it up to the minister is not making me feel warm all over.

Secondly, if we want to look at the big picture, we saw how much was wasted at Ornge: hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers'—folks, that was just one thing. Then there was eHealth and the electronic health card that was supposed to be set up for Ontario; it's still being worked out seven years later, and they've admittedly blown \$188 million and they only have \$100 million worth of hardware and software out of that. They admitted that at committee. That's one part of one ministry.

There are 22 ministries. If I could save, say, \$300 million or \$400 million in one ministry—or \$1 billion, for that matter—if you multiply that. That's not counting the 140 agencies, tribunals and other things that the government has immediate control over. I think it would be safe to say that we could save billions around here. You want more money for education? You want more money for health care? You want more money for poverty and you want more money to help all the other people? If you just clean up your own backyard and all the ministries and all the things you govern over, you could save billions. We wouldn't have to be in the budget situation we are in now if we had been practical, if we had watched every ministry, if we had watched the dollars, if we had done what we're supposed to do. And if they, in the last eight

years, had done what they're supposed to do, we wouldn't be in the position we are in now.

When I hear that the minister is going to make the decision, that's a scary concept.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I am pleased to recognize the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We don't want to forget, I think—at the very beginning and express our appreciation to the paramedics, the pilots, the front-line staff at Ornge, who, from the very beginning and throughout this challenging process, have always put patients first. I think all the members of the Legislature would agree with that.

I think it's clear that Ornge is into a new chapter and on a positive path forward. Certainly, we've got new leadership which has been very, very positive as well. There have been a number of measures that have been in place, a number of changes that have been put in place, including appointing a new patient advocate, installing the new medical interiors in the helicopters, expanding the service in Thunder Bay—something of great interest to me as the MPP for Thunder Bay–Superior North—let alone a dedicated flight service in northern Ontario. So there are a number of measures that have been put in place that are indeed positive, let alone including submitting its first quality improvement plan. Those are things that I think we all agree are positive measures.

This legislation takes the very important next step, and it's one that I know is important. It is also about restoring public confidence in Ornge. If the legislation is passed, it will entrench protections for employees who disclose information to an inspector, an investigator or the ministry itself. It will allow the government to take control of Ornge in extraordinary circumstances which may be through the appointment of a supervisor—again, measures that have been in place before—or to employ special investigators, much as we have done in serious cases with our hospitals, and also, very significantly, allow the government to change the performance agreement with Ornge at any one time.

So certainly there are some important measures here. We all need to have a good debate about this, and that's why we are debating it today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments, so I return now to the member for Beaches–East York for his reply.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from Oak Ridges–Markham, Northumberland–Quinte West and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, for their contributions and critique of my debate.

To the Liberal members: Every government, especially this one, will talk about taking small, tiny, incremental steps towards a long-term goal, with which we are never familiar; we never know where they're actually headed.

That is in fact what is contained within the body of this bill. Is it a small, incremental step? Perhaps. Is it what is necessary? Absolutely not.

What is necessary are two things. Number one is to give the Ombudsman control over Ornge and all the other government agencies. We in this party fully believe that the Ombudsman should be there for the entire MUSH sector—the municipalities, the universities, the schools and the hospitals. My colleague from Hamilton Mountain wants to get the Ombudsman involved around the whole issue of children and children's aid. She is absolutely right. For the government to stop the fundamental institution of this province from looking into things that matter most to people is a shame.

The other thing that has to be done and that the government's not talking about is to have Ornge and other governmental agencies akin to Ornge be subject to discussion by or to be called before the appropriate legislative committees. It's not in there. It is not enough, as the member from Oak Ridges–Markham said, to give the minister some authority to do or not do what he or she wishes to do in the future; that is not enough. If government is going to be transparent—and I take the new Premier at her word; she wants transparency in government—it can only see the full light of day when parliamentarians and members of this Legislature have the right to question and when the Ombudsman has oversight over the entire thing so that he can look into the needs and the best outcomes for the people of this province. That's what's needed. That's what's not in the bill, and that's what should be in the bill when we're finished with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for this opportunity again. I have a little more time to go into depth as to what Bill 11 actually represents not only for ourselves here at the Legislature, but also the people of the province of Ontario, the hard-working men and women who pay their taxes faithfully and expect government to respect how those tax dollars are spent.

Let's look at Ornge before it became Ornge. We here in Ontario actually had at one time one of the finest air ambulance services not only here in the province of Ontario, but in Canada as a whole and, I would dare to say, across international boundaries as well. When this government came to power nine and a half years ago, all of a sudden it was warranted or deemed that we needed new air ambulance services, new helicopters. And don't get me wrong: I understand and I can appreciate the fact that an aging fleet obviously needs to be replaced etc. But the manner in which it was done—and this health minister knew full well within her department what was going on with Dr. Chris Mazza and the purchase of those 12 helicopters from the Italian company which has since fallen into other international scandals throughout the world and has actually had fraud charges brought against many of their executive members.

Right from the start, this deal was destined to come off the rails, if you will; it was destined to be a true disaster

not only for the health and well-being of Ontario citizens, but also the front-line workers at the Ornge air ambulance service.

1410

We don't really see much changing in Bill 11. The minister has not come forward and apologized publicly for the role she played in the Ornge scandal. This minister was in fact promoted to Deputy Premier when the new Premier became Premier of the province. I find that rather insulting to the people of Ontario, but it's something we've come to appreciate and realize from this Liberal government: how out of tune they actually are with the people of Ontario and how government should actually function and represent the people. I think that for an individual to be promoted who has shown that her ability in the health care file has been less than adequate speaks volumes of the new Premier and her judgment of character, or lack thereof, and I think it speaks volumes of the minister herself, who has yet to apologize for any role she played in the Ornge scandal.

As mentioned in my two-minute hit, this legislation has no teeth. It's posturing at its finest. I have to give the Liberals credit where credit is due; that is, they are master spinners. They can spin a web that even spiders would actually—

Interjection: Spiderman.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Spiderman would have trouble. It's almost something to behold, to see how they're going to actually spin their way out of this one yet again. If this is what passes for an apology to taxpayers and citizens and the individuals who have actually lost their lives because this minister and this Premier have failed to do their duty, it's a far cry from what I think we deserve as taxpaying citizens.

Again, this piece of legislation, Bill 11, is very much what most legislation this government has been bringing forward since I've been elected. It's all window dressing; it's all fluff; it's an appearance. Again, it's posturing to make it look like they're making changes to a broken system. It looks like they're actually caring about what goes on, on the front lines of our air ambulance service, and I just want to talk to you a little bit about that, Mr. Speaker.

The men and women on the front lines of the Ornge air ambulance service are doing a fantastic job. I don't believe any party would disagree, or challenge the fine work those individuals do on a daily basis. But one of the disparaging things I see from Bill 11 is that it doesn't protect those individuals who see the day-to-day operations and have come forward to myself, but have to remain anonymous because they feel they're going to be persecuted should they step forward and show the inept movements—policies—this government is directing the Ornge air ambulance service in.

I have had no less than three individuals, whom I know personally, who are front-line workers at Ornge, come to me and say, "You know, Rob, here's what's going on. This is what's happening." Bill 11 does not address any of the concerns these individuals have. These

are the individuals who put their lives on the line on a daily basis, and if they're not happy and they see the inefficiencies or the scandals that are still going on and feel they're going to be persecuted for bringing forward their recommendations, their challenges that they see the broken system doing, is a shame.

As mentioned by the member from Beaches–East York, anytime we try to ask for freedom of information documents, whether it's eHealth, Ornge, the gas plants that were cancelled in Oakville and Mississauga, all we get is resistance. If this Premier is honestly serious about being transparent and actually getting down to the business of protecting the taxpayers and the health and well-being of the citizens of this great province, it's time to do it now. The time for charades and shenanigans is over. We need to get back to work, some serious work that can actually improve the system.

This Bill 11 does not do that, and it's frustrating. It's frustrating for myself and it's frustrating for my colleagues here on both sides of the opposition and the third party to sit here and watch as this government under the new Premier, Ms. Wynne, and the health minister—who is the same as under Mr. McGuinty's government, and we know what kind of a disaster that was—

Interjection: And then she got a promotion.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Yes, and then she gets promoted, as I alluded to earlier.

The morale of the front-line workers at Ornge is at a low. I know this first-hand. The minister says that when she talks to front-line workers, that's not what she's hearing, but I can honestly tell you it's what I'm hearing and it's what other members of the opposition and third party are hearing from individuals from Ornge. The fact is that morale is at a low, and those individuals point out that they see through what the Liberals are trying to do: They're trying to do damage control. They're doing damage control, and it's not working. It's not going to fly, if you will, Mr. Speaker—not this time around.

Here we have a party who I believe are scratching at desperation, trying to put forward legislation like Bill 11 that isn't going to actually have any real positive influence. As I alluded to and spoke to during my two-minute hit, we also see that this, when it gets to committee, is going to have to go through a major transformation before we will even consider looking at it. I don't know if that's going to actually occur, but it definitely needs some major, major face and plastic surgery. It won't even be recognizable if it does come out of committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for questions and comments, I wish to remind all members of provincial Parliament in the House at the moment, and others, that questions and comments—or, as we call them, two-minute hits—are intended to relate back to the member's speech that was just given. I would encourage all members to make sure that their questions and comments relate back to the remarks that were just given by the member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

I recognize the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I'm glad you mentioned that; I'm going to actually do that.

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West hit on a good topic. He talked about accountability in different agencies that are governed by this Liberal government.

If I remember correctly, if memory serves me correctly, I believe that this government tried to fire André Marin, and the opposition kept him in place. They wanted to get rid of him. Why? Because he was doing a good job and he was digging into places where they didn't want him to dig.

Now they talk about this Bill 11. Bill 11 is simply one category, one small part, of the big picture. Like I stated before, and I'll reiterate, we have 22 major ministries and another 150 agencies, tribunals and other things that this government oversees, which could relate to hundreds and hundreds and billions of dollars. They, for some reason, are afraid to give the Ombudsman oversight so he can look into these things and save hundreds of millions of dollars which we could put forth to the government, this what they call new government, which is really the old government with a new mask. The bottom line here is that they've never liked oversight and they've never liked to dig up information.

I'll give you a perfect example, from when I was on committee, on the electronic health cards that they were doing. I happened to be on committee that day, and to make a long story short, because I don't have a lot of time, I asked them what the money situation was, how much the taxpayer got for their money, and they wouldn't tell me. I had to put in for freedom of information. It came back to me, and they said, "Well, we spent \$288 million. We got \$100 million worth of hardware and software." I said, "What happened to the other \$188 million?" The other \$188 million, Speaker, went to three Liberal-friendly consulting agencies; 60% or better of the budget was spent on their friends.

If that isn't a waste of money, I don't know what is.

1420

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments on the remarks by the member for Northumberland–Quinte West? I recognize the member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for that reminder. I certainly will be addressing my remarks to those by the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

It appears that he has the belief that all was well with air ambulance prior to the structure that led to Ornge, so I'd like to ensure that he's aware of what the Auditor General thought of the previous air ambulance situation in Ontario. From his report in 2005, he found that in fact Ontario's air ambulance system was fractured, with disjointed services and multiple structures in the system that made it difficult to align resources. There was a shortage of critical care air paramedics. That meant that air ambulance flights were frequently down-staffed, especially in northern Ontario—this is going back to 2005.

There was no centralized way to track the air ambulance system's performance, nor were there outcome measures used in operating the system. The system was confusing and difficult for patients to navigate. The system lacked transparency and accountability, and there was a poor structure for patient privacy protection. Several coroners' investigations found that the air ambulance system, as it was then structured, contributed to the deaths of Ontarians.

What has happened since then, of course, is that Ornge was a rogue agency. Its board of directors apparently was unaware of their fiduciary responsibility to the Ontario taxpayer. The CEO clearly was paid salaries that were far in excess of what was reasonable. So what we have now with Bill 11 is every effort to rein in what has become an agency that was out of control, and I'm glad to say that there has been progress under the new management. In fact, at this point in time, some 97.3% of base aircraft are available at all times. They're hitting almost up to that 100% figure with that kind of availability. They're making steps forward, and we need Bill 11 to ensure that Ornge never happens again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a privilege to get up and speak to the member from Northumberland and his new look: 15 pounds lighter since the last time I saw him; getting ready for the Legiskaters game coming up, so looking for good things.

Listening to him talk about the lack of transparency—although I haven't been able to sit on many of the committee meetings, I've heard back a lot of the discussions and some of the points of the key witnesses, who talked about how the information was given back to this government. The intent not to—you wonder if they had an intent to listen at all.

We also heard from the member of the third party, the leader at the time, in the December before all the news hit the Toronto Star, where they talked about people disappearing from the sunshine list, a key indication that something was going wrong. When the member from Newmarket–Aurora stood up and asked questions about issues on Ornge, again, he was reassured that they had checked into it and there were no issues. I guess it seemed more of—I don't know if you can use the word "scheme" or not, but a program to get by the upcoming election, so the information wasn't brought up.

But even after the election, the Auditor General was being blocked from looking at things. That should be a warning, when the Auditor General comes to you and says that they're being stonewalled and not able to see things. It's surprising that when the news broke in the Toronto Star, there was a keen interest to get to the bottom—more than a year after the first indications that we would see. In my time on TV, I've heard that witnesses have said that they had full oversight, that certainly not writing a cheque would get full attention.

It's just a matter of: Are they interested or are they not?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments, one more?

Mr. Michael Prue: To the member from Northumberland–Quinte West: I listened intently to what he had to say. I especially like to listen to some of the newer members of the House to see the kind of mettle they have and how they are able to respond and pick up the concepts. I think he has got it exactly right. Even though he's only been here a relatively short period of time, he understands intuitively, I think, that the government cannot continue to hide behind the things in the ways that they have.

He outlined about getting redacted documents, which I think is frustrating to all members in the opposition. He talked about the need for the Ombudsman to have some kind of oversight to make sure that the government is held accountable. He talked about the need for the committees in order to do the job that I know he wants to be able to do. Those are the important things that are being said to this government. I commend him for those. These are the important things we are trying to say from this side of the House to over there.

In the past, when you had a majority government, you never paid any heed to the wisdom of this side of the House. I call upon the members over there to remember: You're staring up there at the owl. The owl is to be wise. The motto of the House is to listen to the other side.

You need to be listening to this particular member. You need to be listening to what he has to say, because what he has to say will make this place function better. But more importantly, what he has to say will make the people of Ontario much more confident in their politicians and in the process of this House.

One thing that the people of this province do not like is to see their tax dollars wasted. If there's ever an opportunity to try to rein that in, they will take it. This government needs to be fully aware, before the Premier goes out looking for revenue tools, that the revenue tools she has now are being wisely spent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for his reply.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I do want to thank the members who spoke: the members for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Oak Ridges–Markham and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—thank you for those nice comments—and of course the member from Beaches–East York.

There are some very good points that were made here on this side of the Legislature, Mr. Speaker. I think we're doing our due diligence. We're doing what we were elected to do, and that is to hold this government to account. It's to make sure that this government doesn't run away with and lose sight of what they were actually elected to do, and that's to run the province of Ontario in a fiscally responsible manner and also to make sure that those tax dollars are not being wasted, which obviously has been very disappointing for us on this side of the chamber.

The member from Oak Ridges–Markham made a point that our helicopters previous to Ornge needed some

repairs. The Auditor General did make out some improvements that could have been desired. But to actually enhance or implement those recommendations by the Auditor General and then turn around and allow a completely different entity under the guise of Ornge is completely devastating. We have helicopters here where the front-line workers cannot perform the CPR that's required to stabilize a patient in transfer to hospital before they get the care that they need.

So there's a lot of things that we do right on this side of the chamber, and I'm proud to say that we do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: As always, it's my great pleasure and honour to rise and speak on behalf of my community in Davenport. I'm happy to join the debate on Bill 11.

I want to welcome folks up here to the Legislature today and just mention this to Grandma Grace at home: If you're tuning in today, Grandma Grace, as you often do, this is a bit of a rerun. This is a repeat show. This is Days of Our Lives, but we've seen this one already, I think, because, in fact, this bill was introduced previously. There was a very, very long break. We were all anxious to see our favourite show resume here at Queen's Park. A year later, we're back here, and we're still debating this.

So I would say that this is important. We obviously need more transparency and accountability in this Legislature. Nothing could be clearer to the people of Ontario. We will be working to strengthen this bill and to send it to committee to make it stronger.

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In her lead, our health critic made an important comment. She talked about, back when the bill was first produced, way back in March 2012, she understood that there were shortcomings, but she realized that this was a bill put together in a rush at that time and it was an attempt to make things better. But now it's April 2013, and we're seeing the exact same bill, with all of its flaws, being introduced for a second time.

During the second reading debate last session, the NDP talked about the changes we wanted to see in this bill. These changes were reasonable. They would increase oversight. They would improve transparency within our health services.

Just this morning, our health critic asked the Premier to launch an independent investigation into the chemo drug underdosing scandal and to have that headed up by the Ontario Ombudsman.

I know that Health Minister Deb Matthews has said that she will conduct an independent third party review of quality assurance in our cancer drug supply chain, but that's just a first step, and it's not enough. The minister has not guaranteed that the findings will be shared with the people of Ontario or how this happened in the first place. An Ombudsman investigation would be open and transparent and it would provide answers for the families of the 1,000 people who were affected.

As this most recent event unfortunately shows, it's important that we have this kind of third party objectiv-

ity. People trust the Ombudsman as someone who objectively investigates government actions on behalf of the people. That's why we suggested in our amendments to Bill 11 that there be Ombudsman oversight of Ornge, to provide real accountability and transparency.

Oversight of Ornge by the Ombudsman was denied by this government. Instead, the government has given itself the power to appoint representatives to the board of Ornge, to appoint a supervisor or special investigator without notice and to issue directives to designated air ambulance providers. I think our health critic said it best when she said that "everything that is in this bill gives the government more of a say; it does not give the people of Ontario more of a say."

While the government claims this will increase accountability, it has ignored the facts, and this government did not fulfill its obligations under the previous accountability agreement. So if the problem wasn't the accountability measures or the powers given to the government in the first place, it raises questions of how this new act will actually prevent another Ornge.

Another significant concern about this bill is that it does not apply to other government-funded organizations or services. Speaker, I've said this before: Ornge is going to be a very well-scrutinized agency in the future. It must be. Nobody will let anything go by without notice. But will this government be extending this kind of scrutiny and this kind of accountability to other organizations and agencies? We have an opportunity here to be proactive, but this government has, I think, completely chosen to ignore that chance.

The NDP advocates for strong whistle-blower protection. Our health critic has made important comments on the whistle-blower protection that this bill offers. She has said that it recognizes that "in theory, the whistle-blower cannot be dismissed, cannot be disciplined, cannot have a penalty, cannot be intimidated, coerced or harassed." But if it were to occur anyway, if a whistle-blower was dismissed, what then? They'd have to fight it out in court. Where is the support for a whistle-blower once they are dismissed?

Speaker, this bill cannot obscure the fact that the Ministry of Health has refused to look at their own role in this. The reality is that this bill will do nothing to prevent future scandals from occurring at other government-funded organizations. I wasn't around for the years preceding, but I know that my colleagues raised issues about this. They spoke up to this government constantly, and they were ignored continuously. This bill is not addressing the continued arrogance of this government to listen to other members of this Legislature, to be responsible and accountable to the people of Ontario, and to change the model in which they operate in this province.

Speaker, we need real public health care in this province that has proper oversight and accountability and transparency. Instead, we've seen just example after example of this government offloading their responsibility, downloading and privatizing. This is just the latest result of this kind of method that the government seems so attached to.

In the last year, since March 2012, the government, in fact, has done very little to strengthen this bill. I would say that I'm not the only person who feels very frustrated about this. When we talk about Ornge, it's important to remember that not only were millions of dollars wasted but, unfortunately, lives were wasted. People died. This government allowed Ornge to mismanage its services, and many of those who ended up alerting the public to this mismanagement within this agency, the whistle-blowers, lost their jobs and their livelihoods.

It's important to remember that this bill was originally introduced the very same day that the Ornge scandal came to light. As my colleagues have all mentioned before, this bill was clearly an attempt to change the channel, an attempt to make it look like the government was taking steps to address this issue. But as I've mentioned already, the government hasn't really shown any commitment at all to make things better. Before reintroducing this bill, the government should have taken into consideration the changes that we had proposed last session and come back with a stronger bill.

It's these kinds of political games, I believe, that people are tired of. This government has played these kinds of games with the people of Ontario, and as a result, people are losing faith in our government and our health care system. People are fatigued with the politics of this province and these types of failures from this government.

Even as Ornge is still under investigation, we hear news that their top executives are getting bonuses this year, even after all this mismanagement. It's easy to understand how and why this upsets people. I've had constituents in Davenport write to me in dismay. "How can this be happening?" they say. They're angry and they're frustrated with this government.

There are people who have been disappointed and disgusted with the government for quite a few years now, and we have a long road ahead of us to repair their faith and restore their faith in this process. But some of this stuff starts to wear at people who are most active and most hopeful about the positive role that government can and must take in this province. Each time that government lets us down in these ways, we lose a little bit of our hope in the democratic process in Ontario.

My constituents in Davenport wish that the government was dealing with this scandal appropriately. They wish that Queen's Park was moving faster. They wish that we were actually addressing issues that matter to them and not just discussing pretty empty legislation for a second time around. Instead, there are a number of things I know they wish we were discussing here in Queen's Park. The 600,000 people who don't have work wish we were taking this time to talk about a real jobs plan in Ontario. The young people in the gallery today might have concerns about the cost of their tuition for post-secondary school, for college and for university. The fact that when you do graduate from school after paying the highest tuitions anywhere in Canada right now—probably five times what I paid when I went to school—

you'll be graduating without very many job opportunities. The jobs that you will be eligible to get will not go very far in terms of repaying your tuition. In fact, unfortunately, most people will be left still at home with their parents in their parents' basement. Sorry to break the bad news to you guys up there, but that's true. Right?

Whether it's jobs or the issue of transit that we desperately need to take action on—if anybody took transit here today, you know that we are 10, 20, 30 years behind when it comes to investment in our public transit system. I wish that we were having that debate here today instead of this second go-round on this pretty empty bill.

Folks up in the gallery, please don't lose hope. We're going to turn this around. It might not happen today, but it will happen. Stick with it. We're going to do things better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the member for Davenport for his presentation. Questions and comments to the member for Davenport? The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I listened intently to the honourable member's speech and I want to pick up where he left off and this whole idea of moving faster. I think it's time that we brought to everyone's attention that we have now spent over 12 hours debating a bill that is very similar to one that had already been seen by the Legislature last fall. I think that there's agreement on all sides of the House that what happened at Ornge was unacceptable and that we need better oversight at Ornge.

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We've seen yeoman service by the Minister of Health, who took a number of steps, including the unfortunate step of calling in the police to look into it. We've seen new governance at Ornge. We've seen new safeguards put in place. Yet this bill represents the final step in terms of making sure we have proper oversight of Ornge and that we can make sure that it is—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to hear with the heckling.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask members to come to order and allow the government House leader to make his two-minute response.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: This is the final piece, put in place to make sure we have proper oversight of Ornge, that we can make sure it is a strong organization, which the people of Ontario expect, and that we can also provide protection to the employees of Ornge, particularly the front-line staff, who I think all of us, on all sides of the House, respect.

It has been over 12 hours. Those who are following this debate may note that the government has not been putting up speakers to participate in the formal debate, just in the two-minute portions, which I'm participating in right now, because quite frankly, we think it's time that this bill went to committee.

Members of the opposition are saying they see weaknesses in the bill and they look forward to discussion in committee. Mr. Speaker, I'm calling on them to allow this bill to proceed to committee so that we can have that sort of debate and discussion and make sure we come forward with a piece of legislation that is strong and provides protection for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments to the member for Davenport?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise to speak on the comments made by the member from Davenport. He brought up some good points about the need for the role of the Ombudsman. We hear a government that is talking about the need to find out or have oversight. But of course they're not listening to the opposition when they talk about options that would allow them—if the ministry is unable to provide proper oversight, we have the wherewithal in this House to look after that.

I really question that they talk about the debate, the 12 hours, the rush to get through here. But I remember that they prorogued the House back in October, so there wasn't that big a need to get this through. It sat for four months, and now we're restarting the whole process.

We hear about different witnesses coming forth. I was a bit shocked the other day to hear the commissioner of the OPP answering some of the questions coming forth. One of them was that one of our key witnesses, after a year and a half, still had not been interviewed. It shows the slow process to get through some of these investigations and where this government really, with the list of witnesses to go through—whether there's really an interest.

We also saw today two whistle-blowers who have lost their jobs. Again, they talk about protection, but where is the protection for the people who have come forth and really let the public know that there was an issue there? Would we know today if people hadn't come forth?

We on our side saw a letter—I don't think the House saw it—where Ornge issued a statement to its employees, threatening them with not only firing but lawsuits if they continued to let information out.

So, lots of questions, and we look forward to more answers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments to the member for Davenport?

Mr. Michael Prue: I want to go right along where the last speaker was just coming from, and that's the whole issue of whistle-blower protection. I'm glad that the member from Davenport raised this issue, because we in this House often forget that a great many people who work for the civil service of Ontario, a great many public employees, are very, very dedicated to their jobs. They're dedicated to the point that when they see inaction, when they see wrongdoing, they have an obligation and, I think, a moral responsibility to come forward and talk about that.

Very often, a whistle-blower will find himself or herself on the wrong end. They'll find themselves unemployed, they'll find themselves disciplined, they'll

find themselves without a job, they'll find themselves blackballed from the civil service. When you take that extraordinary step of coming forward, you need to know that there's some protection at the other end.

What was just said is absolutely right. We saw whistle-blowers who were threatened with their jobs and with their livelihood, who were told there were going to be civil suits—they were told all kinds of things—and this is why people have not come forward in the past. This is the same Ornge we're talking about, and the same Ornge that we're demanding to have Ombudsman protection, because if you have an Ombudsman, you can go to the Ombudsman in confidence, you can talk about those kinds of things, and you're not going to put your job at risk.

We saw last night on the news—and it's not right on point here, but—a whistle-blower at the Royal Bank who came forward and talked about how he was being downsized, how 45 Canadians are being put out of a job so that the jobs can be outsourced and people brought in from India to take those jobs. There is a hue and cry across this country, and that whistle-blower needs to be protected, even though he's not in government. Those are the kinds of people who need to be protected if we are going to secure jobs and keep things moving well in this province and in this country. We ought to be taking our hat off to them, not firing them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, I am going to repeat it: The board of directors of Ornge and the CEO of Ornge, Dr. Mazza, failed Ontarians, failed the employees, failed the patients and failed one of us. It's an embarrassment. It should never have happened, so I hope that we will proceed to committee to make sure that the new act, Bill 11, passes through committee, because it's not here that we're going to amend the bill.

I am wondering: Why is there this delay? For the Conservatives, the official opposition, is it because this mess was started by their Minister of Health, Tony Clement? But I don't understand why the NDP are stalling the process.

We should move forward. We have an excellent bill here in front of us. We have a Minister of Health who wants to clean up this process, so she put forward new governance, and I hope that the new board of directors—and I'm calling on every member of every board of directors in Ontario who are managing the precious tax dollars of Ontarians who pay their taxes—will administer that as if it was their money. We have a new board of directors; we have a new CEO, Dr. McCallum, who is the president and CEO, who was the chief coroner in Ontario—I worked with him—a very fine person, a very qualified person. We also have all sorts of processes that were put in place to make sure that Ontarians have value for their dollar.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments, and we go back to the member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you to all those who rose to speak to this bill.

As I said at the beginning, we would like to get this bill into committee. We would like to strengthen it and, as my colleague from Beaches–East York said, we, in fact, believe that there needs to be strengthened whistle-blower protection in this bill so this will not happen again. As I said in my comments, this should be extended to other public agencies as well. We see this over and over again.

While I welcome the comments of all folks in this chamber, I do have a difficult time being lectured to by the government about this bill. I said in jest that my Grandma Grace, who does tune in to this channel, was tuning in for a repeat, but it is true. This is the second time around. This has been over a year now, and we have not seen progress here. We have a big job to do to restore people's faith in this political system, and this does nothing to do that work.

To be lectured to by the Minister of Correctional Services on this issue when I remember that for years as a citizen of this province, we would ask her office, when she was Minister of Social Services, to take action on poverty, to help people out when it comes to welfare, and we have reports sitting here to reform social assistance, we have regulations that could have been enacted yesterday, weeks ago or a year ago that would make people's lives easier, and yet we have a government that likes to stand there and lecture us about slowing things down here.

1450

Last October 15, when this place was shut down—the new Premier likes to boast about how fast she brought the Legislature back after being elected as leader, yet in fact we've seen the government return with no agenda. They have the same tired agenda as when we left. I would like to go back to Davenport and assure people that things are under control in this Legislature, that there is a plan to move things forward, yet it's times like this when I actually don't have that much faith—certainly not in this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Furtherer debate.

Mr. Peter Shurman: This is déjà vu. I remember debating Bill 50, which is this bill in its previous incarnation, before the prorogation that my friend from Davenport just referred to.

I might say, although this is not in response to my friend from Davenport, that he has a very good point when he says he doesn't need lectures from any minister, in this particular case the Minister of Community Safety and francophone affairs, standing up and talking about how she's embarrassed, and there is embarrassment about what Dr. Mazza did. In fact, if there's any embarrassment associated with how Ornge deteriorated to what it became, to the point where it perpetrated, I think, grave injustices on the province of Ontario and its citizens, that embarrassment should be on the part of the current and then Minister of Health.

I can't believe that that same minister is sitting there to this day and feels that somehow or other, by bringing Bill 50 and now Bill 11 before this House, the government is absolved from what is clearly implicit in terms of how they didn't manage the affairs of Ornge. I'm going to tell you something. For you, Speaker, and for other members listening, for people at home who are watching on television and wondering what we're doing discussing how to fix Ornge through a bill like this—because by the way, we're not going to fix anything with a bill like this. At this point, you're confused; you're not half as confused as we are in the House.

Back probably over two years ago, and unbeknown to most people in this House, I was somewhat involved behind the scenes in what was transpiring as my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora began to gather information, in his role as our transportation critic, on what had become apparent to us behind the scenes at that point as a major mess called Ornge. I was involved because some of the whistle-blowers came via me. I had a number of meetings in my office where I heard stories and received files that related to things like boats and foundations and chopper motorcycles and something called the “crystal palace,” which housed the headquarters of Ornge; and the unbridled excesses of the person who ran it, and how he was recruited as what had been by reputation a great emergency room doctor from Sunnybrook who became a power-drunk, crazy person in terms of how he ran a \$150-million-per-year operation on behalf of the province of Ontario without any supervision, tutelage or oversight by this government whatsoever, under the stewardship of this very minister who brings a bill that is supposed to be a band-aid that covers all of this. It's absolutely inconceivable.

Ornge was, to the points raised by some of my government colleagues, originally designed to replace the Ontario air ambulance service, its predecessor. That indeed did start under a Conservative government but was brought to fruition in the incipient stages of the new Liberal government after 2003. So the germ of the idea was a good idea, and it was inherited and adopted by the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty as a good idea.

Interjection: In fact, embraced.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It was embraced by that government. What they did was, they dropped the ball on how to do it. That's what happened.

Here we are today and what we're talking about is a bill that effectively, to coin a phrase, locks the stable door after the horse is gone. That means we're operating on the basis that we're way too late. To use another cliché, during the period of time that Dr. Mazza ran Ornge, what we were doing was, we were giving the keys to the henhouse to a fox. That fox had his way with all of the hens in the henhouse, and now we're here putting the band-aid on.

So it pains me to be standing here today talking about this. When we finally do see this bill go to committee, as I'm sure it will, despite the fact that I have no intention of voting for it, it will be discussed. It will come back in

some form and it will still be unacceptable, because at the end of the day, unless serious oversight clauses and controls are brought into this bill, and until reasonable protections for whistle-blowers are brought into this bill, this bill is not worth the paper that it's printed on.

The McGuinty-Wynne Liberals are in a position where they want to use this bill as a screen, but they can't use this bill as any kind of a public relations ploy to erase the fact that they sat idly by as millions of taxpayer dollars went down the drain with Ornge.

This happened over a period of years—years. People knew, and I would have to suggest that there were some signs inside of the ministry that this was going on. Yet the ability for it to trickle up to the minister or find its way up to the minister—it should have been a red flag in her eyes—just wasn't there.

I will recall for this House another day. It was several Christmases ago. This House was on its last day before Christmas break, and I guess it must have been 2010. The Ornge situation was bubbling to the surface. It hadn't been brought to the fore in this House to any extent. I was on media point that day, so it was my job to be spokesperson for my party. I was making the rounds to the different media outlets to talk to them about Ornge. I related this story when we were debating Bill 50. Interestingly, at that time as I went from one media office to the other up on the third floor of this building, I kept criss-crossing paths with Minister Matthews. What was she doing? She was going to the same media offices I was to put out the fires that she would contend I was starting. I didn't start the fires; the Liberal government started the fire and fanned the flames by not doing what it should have done in a situation that was under its tutelage.

The bottom line is, here we are with Bill 11, which is indeed that PR ploy.

Ontarians paid a lot of money for this. Indeed, one could say without my trying to sound overly melodramatic that some Ontarians probably paid with their health; maybe some paid with their lives. Ontarians paid for Chris Mazza's \$1.4-million salary. They paid thousands of dollars in expenses for luxurious trips and \$1.2 million in loans for mortgages and such for Ornge and its different subsidiaries. They paid for a classic chopper motorcycle that, I think, at auction went for—what is it, \$40,000? Something like that, some ridiculous amount of money. They paid for special commissions to the tune of about \$6 million that came in to a web of companies that were not even known by this government to exist under Ornge as a commission for buying helicopters that were never countenanced by this government to be bought. These are the kinds of stories that we heard as the Ornge scandal unfolded.

AgustaWestland sold those helicopters when nobody ever said that we needed new helicopters. There was a company, Canadian Helicopters, that was providing, from everything I understand it to be, a very, very good service before we decided somehow that we needed our own owned-and-operated fixed-wing aircraft and rotary aircraft.

The people who ran the Ornge organization at that time raised the money for that by setting up companies that floated bond issues and pulled \$200 million or \$250 million out of the air to buy those helicopters. And still this government didn't step in.

I could go on with stories about how this all unfolded from my own recollections or from testimony given at committee. But the fact of the matter is, all of this went on under Liberal noses, and no Liberal noses smelled a rat.

Old habits die hard. The McGuinty-Wynne government cannot help but have one taxpayer spending scandal after another, one after the other. The big wheel just keeps on turning, doesn't it? Ornge is an example, but there's a long list. What have we been discussing in this House in every question period and outside of question period since we've been back here? I don't mean back here today; I mean back here after prorogation and before prorogation. In fact, what was the reason for prorogation? The Liberal government does not want to admit it blew \$1 billion—probably more than \$1 billion—on killing two power stations as a result of its electoral imperatives.

That's the kind of government that the people of Ontario have. That's the same kind of government that allowed Ornge to operate to the tune of 150 million taxpayer dollars per year and have it subverted. It's the same government that took \$1 billion and said, "We're going to build an eHealth system that will be something to behold," and we don't have an eHealth system here except where it has been assembled by the private sector in small, little pockets. We don't have a pan-Ontario system where other jurisdictions do. Why? Because a billion dollars was shoveled out the door to Liberal-friendly consultancy firms. That's what this government does.

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I'm debating Bill 11 under a fairly large umbrella here, talking about scandals, but that's what this is. This is a bill that seeks to address scandals perpetrated by the Liberal government or allowed to fester under its nose without any supervision, without any tutelage and without any protections for whistle-blowers who actually wanted to do the right thing. So I'm adding my voice to debate, but I have no intention of voting for this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the member for Thornhill for his comments. We now return to questions and comments to the member for Thornhill, based on his presentation.

I look to the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: You're confusing me, Speaker. Anyway, thank you.

First of all, I'd like to address a comment that was made by the House leader and the minister, both delays which—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's exactly what I was trying to say. Questions and comments are supposed to go to the member for Thornhill based on his remarks, and I would ask him to confine his remarks to that.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay. In your presentation, you mentioned you were concerned about some of the delays that go on around here, and they were talking about certain groups stalling and not getting things. In reference to your comment, for the Speaker's benefit, let me give you some examples of delays by the government which affect your position:

—not showing up for subcommittee meetings, which require all three parties to move the agenda for the main committee;

—asking for 20-minute recesses on committee to slow down the process—they didn't like the motions; and

—stalling on House leaders' meetings if it wasn't suiting their agenda for the order paper and for their friendly Liberal agenda.

You talk about exposure and public outcry for exposure. Well, here they are limiting on Bill 11—limiting it to just one category and to one specific situation, which was Ornge—as opposed to doing it for the entire ministries, where they could have saved hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. If you had oversight by the Ombudsman, you wouldn't have all these kind of cloudy areas—grey areas—that you can't get to and get delayed. That's the problem.

The waste that's gone on for years around here, why didn't they deal with these problems—I don't care—30, 40 years ago? Why didn't you plug these holes, that things are delayed or things that should have been dealt with years ago? We probably could have saved billions of dollars in this province that could have gone toward education, health and all the things that our citizens really need. But no—until they get caught, until they get exposed by a newspaper or they get exposed by a whistle-blower; then something gets done. I think that's called johnny-come-lately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments to the member for Thornhill? I recognize the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll do my very best to follow your directions and address the remarks from the member from Thornhill.

We are addressing Bill 11. By listening to the various comments, I can't disagree that the front-staff people have been doing a tremendous job and they are continuing to do a tremendous job at Ornge.

Now, if there is something that we all understand, that we all agree on, it's the oversight that has been somewhat missing over the years—no excuses for that. I mean, this happens with every government at any time, anywhere, with some of the people who are really not being overseen on a regular basis. You can't fault the whole team because of one player.

The minister, Speaker, has made a lot of important changes, a lot of good changes, and they are being shown the changes that have been made. The question is that we have a bill now, and I hear from a member of the opposition saying, "Well, unless you do this, we can't support it." Well, the bill is here for discussion. Let's send it to our committee. Let's see what improvements we can

make. We are looking for their ideas on how we can make it better. So bring it back, Speaker, and then we can bring it to the House, amended according to their wishes, so indeed, the bill can be better.

But to say, "Over the years, this happened"—this is something that started under a different government.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, Ornge was 2005.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Absolutely, absolutely.

The thing is this: We are debating Bill 11. I hope that we can move it along. We look forward to the members of the opposition coming up with those ideas to make some changes so we can indeed make the bill much better than it is today. We look forward to that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments to the member for Thornhill?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to comment on the member from Thornhill's remarks.

He spoke about Bill 11, and he mentioned quite a few things there. He also went into some of the other areas of difficulty that the government has brought forward, whether it was eHealth and what happened there—those were mentioned in his comments—along with a number of other aspects that have come forward.

I think that the essence, which hasn't really been discussed from my perspective, is that when a government is given the privilege and honour to govern in our province, they are given the ability to bring individuals to the table to make decisions on behalf of the public at large. What we're seeing here is incorrect decisions, whether, as the member from Thornhill mentioned, about the eHealth and what took place there, and the billions of dollars there. He also mentioned what happened with the power plants. But here in Ornge, it's the same aspect. It's the ability of the government to come forward with individuals to make those decisions on behalf of the public interest.

We're seeing billions of dollars that are being wasted. It's costing the taxpayer billions of dollars on a regular basis. And guess what? The end result is that the public service at large is now being punished for those actions of the incorrect decisions or the inability to bring the correct people to make those decisions on behalf of the province of Ontario.

We've got great individuals in Ornge. I called in at Ornge once, when I happened upon a site, and it was great to see the individuals doing great work there. But the inability to have the correct individuals at the helm, on behalf of the province, is where the essence lies.

Quite frankly, we need to ensure that when these individuals come forward, they're making the best decisions so it's not costing the taxpayers or individuals in the incorrect decisions we're making. I certainly hope we'll be able to see that coming forward in further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my colleague the member from Thornhill. It's always a pleasure to listen to him.

He did divulge—and this was new to me—his role in the whistle-blowers. I commend him for that, because oftentimes we don't know anything about things that go on around here. For your part, listening to the whistle-blowers and bringing that information forward to your colleague the member from Aurora was a good thing.

In terms of whistle-blowers, I neglected earlier, when I was talking about whistle-blowers, to also mention the people at Marineland who were here today, and the travail they're going through at this particular point, because they are being threatened with all kinds of action for doing what I think is an absolutely noble thing.

Animals cannot speak for themselves, and it's only people like whistle-blowers who can talk and protect those animals that are at Marineland and other places. We need to make sure they don't get fired, and that people who act like them don't get fired. Whether they're in the civil service or on the outside, everybody deserves that kind of protection for coming forward and doing the right thing.

I also listened to what my friend had to say about not supporting the legislation. I'm not surprised. The Conservatives have chosen not to support any legislation, really, for the last while.

But in all likelihood, as he stated, it will go to committee. If it does go to committee, I am asking the members of the Conservative Party, and this particular member from Thornhill, to do everything in his power to make sure that the legislation is strengthened to the point that the government might not even want to pass their own legislation.

What we need to do, and what the opposition needs to do with legislation that is so weak and so improper is build it into something we would do if we were in government, and then make sure it's done right. I'm hoping he will at least give that a thought.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Thornhill for his reply.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I listened with interest to my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek; the minister for seniors affairs; the member for Oshawa and the member for Beaches–East York, each one of them bringing a bit of a different perspective to what I had to say.

If I can go in reverse, I think it's germane to address what the member from Beaches–East York had to say about the fact that the Progressive Conservative Party seems to be—these are my words, not his—disengaged from some of the legislative effort here.

Look, let's be candid: The Progressive Conservative caucus, at this point, has taken a look at what's coming from other side since the so-called new government of Premier Wynne. There's a reason why we call it the McGuinty-Wynne government: because it's business as usual, and that's not a business that we can accept. If we appear to be negative, it's because we believe that this has got to change. It's only by change that we're going to get to a point where we don't need Bill 11 band-aids to go on wounds that are open to the heart of the people of Ontario. That's what Bill 11 really shines a light on at this point.

1510

The member from Oshawa talked about what a privilege and an honour it is to govern, and what it means is that you have to be in charge. You have to be vigilant. That's what I spoke of. That's what Bill 11 speaks to and its predecessor Bill 50 speaks to. If the government, through the government House leader, wonders why we're practising what he terms delaying tactics—these are not delaying tactics at all. This is legitimate debate on the subject at hand, and the subject at hand is only evidenced by Bill 11; it is not Bill 11. Bill 11 talks about redress by giving some kind of strange protection to whistle-blowers, that kind of thing, and by saying in words that they're going to do something they haven't done. We have no reason to believe it now any more than we did before prorogation and any more than we did before Ornge came to light.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 11, and I'd like to point out that the heart of this whole debate going on today is the aspect of trust and accountability. The Ornge scandal represents a textbook case of government mismanagement and cover-up, the likes of which form the basis of political cynicism. Every day, as an elected official, I am driven by my sense of duty to the constituents. They are my employer, they pay my salary and expect that I serve them to the best of my ability.

With the complexity of the Ornge scandal, one might lose that fact, but the reality is that we're all here to serve the people of Ontario. They put their trust in us, and we have the duty to act in the best interests of this province.

The story of Ornge's origin is fairly straightforward. It started out as a divestiture of a government service to a non-profit organization in an attempt to serve the people of Ontario. Divesting services to a capable service provider does have merit. It can allow for more efficient and cost-effective operation of a service. With a clear vision and adequate government oversight, divestment can achieve superior results for the people of Ontario. And yet, since the time of divesting air ambulance services to Ornge, we have seen these services devolve. Millions of scarce health care dollars have been squandered, front-line health care professionals have had the ability to carry out their responsibilities compromised, and above all, patients' lives have been put at risk.

My colleague from Newmarket—Aurora has waded into the murky waters of this scandal, Mr. Speaker. Through his efforts, we've been able to paint a disturbing picture of the gross mismanagement and appalling lack of oversight that occurred at Ornge. The allegations against Ornge's CEO Dr. Mazza are severe. A full investigation by the police will reveal the degree to which his actions were criminal, and he will be reprimanded appropriately.

However, the activities of Dr. Mazza and his organization could only carry on with the approval of the Ministry of Health. Just because taxpayer dollars flow to

an organization outside of the ministry does not mean the ministry suddenly sheds responsibility for how these dollars get spent. Ontario people trust that if we're paying for the services, however they are procured, we are getting the most out of every dollar. Unfortunately, the current Minister of Health has breached this trust by neglecting proper oversight of a vital health care service; Ontario's trust in the current government has been rightfully shaken. Despite this failure on the part of the minister, not only did she not lose her job as Minister of Health; she was promoted to deputy leader. I'm at a loss when asked by constituents why the minister kept her job. In other workplaces, if you fail to perform your duties, you lose your job—plain and simple. Obviously, this did not happen.

So, now we have to contemplate a set of reforms that will install controls that enhance accountability and restore trust in our air ambulance service, but what we have before us is Bill 11, the successor to the government's Bill 50. What concerns me, Mr. Speaker, is that despite 15 days of public hearings and 57 witnesses, Bill 11 remains hollow.

Our new Premier had an opportunity to chart her own course on this particular issue, one that could have separated her from some of the past mistakes of her party. Instead, she has chosen a business-as-usual approach and left us with an inadequate piece of legislation. Not only has this government failed to hold to account the one minister who had the ability to oversee Ornge, it has offered us an empty piece of legislation to fix the problem.

If we actually look at the bill, we see that it empowers a team of special investigators to investigate and report on Ornge. The Ombudsman has made valuable reference to these special investigators. While he acknowledges they will have similar authorities as the Ombudsman, there's one key difference: They will be overseen by ministry staff, rather than be an independent body. The Ombudsman went so far as to say that, the special investigators, "Far from being watchdogs, they would operate on a ministerial dog leash." These are the words of the Ombudsman.

Mr. Marin goes on to speak about Bill 11:

"Every year, our office responds to tens of thousands of complaints, consistently demonstrating its value to elected representatives and the public. As 'Ontario's watchdog,' we are the gold standard in keeping government maladministration at bay. It simply does not make sense to perpetuate our exclusion in a bill that purports to bring credible accountability to Ornge. I would respectfully request your support in bringing the necessary amendments to Bill 11 to ensure that it meets the purpose for which it was presented to the Legislative Assembly."

This letter says it all. Bill 11 will be impotent, so why bring such a weak piece of legislation forward, despite having ample time and testimony since Bill 50 to craft something with teeth?

I can't speak for the government, but it does sound like they're less concerned with actually addressing the

problems than to appear that they're addressing the problems. This is no way to restore Ontario people's trust.

Being an elected official for Ontario, the people from Elgin-Middlesex-London have put their trust in me to ensure that their money is spent wisely and to ensure that their health care system remains safe and accessible. The actions of this government over the last few years with regard to this Minister of Health have shown that we do not have the oversight or the accountability in our health care system to have trust in the system. When you get sick, you expect to get better and you expect to have the system there behind you to treat you.

This government has failed. This government has lost the confidence of myself and the rest of the PC Party, not only through this action of Ornge but through the gas plants, through eHealth and, recently, through the problem with the chemotherapy in London and the rest of Ontario.

We're asking the government to step up to the plate, become accountable, tell the people what they know, open up with Ornge, make the amendments necessary in this Bill 11 and actually do the job that they've been voted to do—not to always react. It's time to become proactive in their government, and they have definitely failed.

I ask the NDP to think hard on the confidence that you have in this scandal-plagued government. You brought up really great points on this Ornge scandal. I hope that you're there with us in committee to make the necessary amendments. But to continually support a government that is letting the people of Ontario down—I'm sure the voters in your ridings have mentioned to you many times, "How can you support a government that's scandal-plagued?" If you take note of the students here, the pages, I'm sure they're held to account every day of their lives from their parents, their families and their schools. They mess up. I'm sure you guys get in a little bit of trouble from moms and dads and aunts and uncles and cousins and teachers. We can have no more but to expect from our government that when they mess up, it's time that somebody takes responsibility and takes action. For the government to continually promote their ministers when they fail in their duties is wrong—it's wrong. We are here to do our job for the people of Ontario. Even though the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals have stayed on the same course, it's time to turn around. It's time to actually do your job as elected officials. Ontario has their trust in us, and we hold this job very dearly to our hearts on this side of the aisle. We, in turn, expect you to do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to join in the conversation here. Thank you for the comments from the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London.

As this is going on, a debate that has been over a year right now, I would like to take the opportunity to highlight the ways that government in the 21st century is actually moving systemically away from an accountable process where they will actually acknowledge that the

buck stops with the government. I think that's exactly what we've seen with the current government. But what we don't see in this bill is an actual understanding about this.

1520

We've seen this government continue to off-load responsibility for things. They continue to create these agencies, and then when the agencies run askew, they say, "Well, this is shocking, and it's horrible, and it's the fault of the individual person who's in charge of this agency," instead of saying, "We're going to take responsibility for this."

What inspires me to be with my caucus, and when I listen to the member from Beaches-East York speak in debate about what we would do if we were government—I think this is the great privilege that we have to be here. We have a chance to speak up in this House on what would make this a better province. I encourage all members to do that when they're here.

When we see agencies like Ornge go so awry, we need to look at all the agencies here.

Just this week, we see this government feign surprise when even more fees are put on consumers when it comes to the task of waste diversion and recycling in Ontario. We all need to be part of reducing our carbon footprint, reducing waste, diverting waste, and yet this government creates these agencies like the one that is now putting the cost onto consumers. That is actually not helping reduce waste at all. In fact, I would just like this government to understand this and to change the direction here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I listened intently to the speech from the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, and I just want to pick up on the theme that he highlighted in the end about taking responsibility, and talk about the responsibility that was taken by the Minister of Health to address the very, very serious problems at Ornge.

We have the good work that was done by the Auditor General, and I referenced this earlier. It's always unfortunate, but the fact is that the police were called in, and it's my understanding they are investigating it. We have the work that was done by the public accounts committee.

Within Ornge itself we've seen new leadership come in. We have seen changes made to the organization there, so that we have a very new culture in an organization which serves a very valuable purpose in this province.

The one piece that is missing is the oversight that is provided through this bill, Bill 11, or in its earlier iteration—a number of speakers have mentioned Bill 50.

The member, in his speech, spoke about the potential for committee study. He spoke about amendments at the committee. As we reach the 13th hour of debate on second reading, I can only reiterate what I said earlier. I think it's time that we put this bill to a vote. I think it's time that it was sent to committee, where committee can undertake the type of dialogue and discussion that's

ongoing, that's needed to strengthen the bill and send it back for third reading.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is the final piece of the puzzle. This is a very serious issue, and the type of filibustering that's going on, in my mind, does not show an opposition that wants to take responsibility in terms of strengthening the oversight of air ambulance here in this province.

Again, I think points have been made by all speakers throughout this debate, but particularly as this is the second time around, I think it's time that we move to a vote, and a vote that I hope will see this bill being sent to committee, where it will get the type of debate and discussion that's required.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today to comment on the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London's comments on Bill 11.

I don't see this as a filibuster. I see this as a good reaction to the bill. We're going back through the bill, we're going to go over this, and we're going to make sure that at the end of the day, it has had a full airing here in the House. That's what the people of Ontario send us here to do.

It's the government of the day that caused the proration, and that's why this bill had to be reintroduced. They could have put clauses in there, when they called the prorogation, that would have kept this legislation, along with a whole lot of other important legislation, alive. They didn't do that. That was their decision. They're the government. They like to tell us continuously about how brilliant they are.

There's nothing in this bill that will provide for a minister's lack of leadership which caused this to be as big a scandal as it is. The air ambulance is a textbook scandal of why people are cynical about politics today, politicians and the bureaucrats that serve this private sector in the delivery of public services.

In this one file, we've seen how a well-intentioned plan to divest the delivery of an essential health care service to an external non-profit corporation resulted in the waste of millions of scarce health care dollars, put patients at risk and compromised the ability of those dedicated front-line providers to carry out their responsibilities. They undermined the viability of long-standing service providers and also a number of other people who got caught up in the vortex of this scandal.

What concerns me most is that, after many days of hearings, almost hundreds of witnesses and thousands of pages of documentary evidence, it's clear that the very structure of Ornge is dysfunctional and that it lacks the professional expertise at the most senior levels to do a good job.

I'll retire now and await the rest of the debate, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm once again standing to this matter in the House. I've had my debate time, and I

know most of the members to my right have had debate time on this. I would also like to see this moved on to committee and don't understand the real concept behind their voting no against it because, once we get into committee, that's where we make it strong and we make sure the government is accountable to these kinds of oversights and making sure that we can put the Ombudsman in place to be able to look at scandals that happen such as this. This is where this work needs to be done: in committee. I agree wholeheartedly: Let's get this out of the House, where we've listened over and over and over again. That we're wasting time here is the bottom line, Mr. Speaker.

Having the Ombudsman able to oversee committees and agencies within this government is crucial. I myself have called for the Ombudsman to be allowed oversight of the children's aid society. Making sure we have protection for our children in this province and that there is an arm's-length body that can investigate and look into these issues is absolutely crucial.

This morning, we heard our leader, Andrea Horwath, speak of the need for Ombudsman oversight when it came to the chemotherapy drugs and allowing him into that process. I know that the Minister of Health has said that they've put together a committee to look at this. But committees and committees over committees just aren't helping.

We have a body and an office in place already that has the ability to do these investigations. There's no reason why the Ombudsman can't be looking into medical people who know the medical history as part of the investigation. We have a body in place to be able to do these things, and we should be looking at the Ombudsman to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments in this round. We return to the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London for his reply.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the member from Davenport, the House leader, and the members from Simcoe-Lambton and Hamilton Mountain for their added comments to this discussion. I think it's very important that each member who wishes to speak on behalf of their constituents gets the opportunity to bring forth their concerns to this House. I don't think this is filibustering; I think it's actually a good debate that we're allowing our members, including myself, a chance to give their 10 minutes or so on this discussion.

As I said from the start, it comes down to trust and accountability. There was improper oversight on the minister's side of things. She could have used the tools that were available to her to take care of this Ornge issue when the member from Newmarket-Aurora first brought the issue up years ago. That was not done.

You have to have accountability in your job, as I know in my position before I was a politician. I was the boss. I took any problem that went along with anything in the system that went wrong. I took full accountability for it. I held that on my other managers, that I gave them the responsibilities.

The Premier of the province had the opportunity to step forward. He didn't. The new Premier came forward, and she has yet to step up to the responsibility in just being the boss.

1530

Now, with the managers who would be in a position at my store, I would hold them fully accountable. If they would step up and take accountability for their actions, we could work through a solution. But to totally ignore that you didn't do your job, I think it's time to make a change. We need a little Donald Trump here, maybe, to sit them down and give the old, "You're fired."

Thanks very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm happy to rise to have some discussion around this Ornge air ambulance act. The objectives of the bill say that it's to provide some additional government oversight measures and to provide whistle-blower protection, but in reality there will be no Ombudsman oversight, even though we had that debate for probably more than 12 hours back in September and October, and for another 12 hours now. The bill gives the ministry a bigger stick, some unprecedented powers, and it provides inadequate whistle-blower protection, copied and pasted from the last bill. It changes Ornge from federal to provincial incorporation—to what end?—and it will not prevent another Ornge scandal from happening.

The government isn't listening; this Liberal government is not listening to the people. It's the same old bill. They haven't listened to the debate from the last time. They had a year, plus four months while we were prorogued, to make amendments to the bill that we debated in this House for hours and hours. Bill 11 is kind of a reaction to being caught asleep at the wheel rather than a concerted effort to make things right and to provide proper oversight.

It's not unlike the Niagara Health System, where the government isn't listening to the people in Niagara. It's not unlike Marineland, where the government is not listening to 85,000 signatures on a petition—20,000 and counting at the Niagara Health System. And it's not unlike what we're hearing today and over last week about improper dosages of chemotherapy and putting patients at risk in this province. So who is listening to the people in Ontario?

We want to get this bill into committee as much as anybody else so that we can make some amendments to it. I had the opportunity to actually listen to the minister without portfolio a few moments ago, who was complaining because we'd already had 12 hours of debate on this issue. Yeah, we've had 12 this time—probably 13. We had 12 or more the last time. But at the end of the day, who prorogued the government? It wasn't us. Who failed to protect the bill that had already been debated? It wasn't us. It was actually the Liberal government that failed to protect that bill when they prorogued. Democracy is all about having the right to get up here and

debate an issue for as long as the rules in this House allow us to debate it for.

What happened at Ornge cannot happen again; it should not happen again. We need to make sure that there is accountability and transparency to ensure successful operation and to regain the trust of the people who live in this province. The government cannot sit idly by, as they did for five years, and watch the taxpayers' money wasted, as it was on Dr. Mazza and the top dogs at Ornge. So we need to make sure that there's proper oversight and we need to extend those measures to all government-funded organizations to make sure this doesn't happen again in any ministry of the government.

Ontarians are looking for answers; they're not looking for a watered-down bill. Unfortunately, Bill 11 isn't the answer that they are looking for. They want a bill that will instill public trust in a ministry that has let the people down.

Why isn't the government listening? Why aren't they listening to people who want to ensure that those hard-earned dollars, their tax dollars, are being used effectively? How can the government expect families to tighten their belts while at the same time allowing millions of dollars to be wasted on scandals that could have been avoided? It's quite clear the government isn't listening.

This is a recurring theme with this government. Whistles were blowing five years ago. The employees were coming forward from Ornge, and the government wasn't listening. The opposition parties were raising the issues in the House again and again and again. It was ignored for five years, and there was a lot of money wasted in that process. But despite everything that's happened—the wasted money, the mismanaged services—the government still won't listen.

I think what people really want is an Ornge air ambulance that is available to them, that's available to their family and available to their loved ones in a timely and effective way and that is a public program. I think one of the most important pieces that's missing from this bill is the Ombudsman oversight. Without it, it fails to achieve a level of transparency and accountability.

We have been calling on the government for Ombudsman oversight for the past year. Ontario is one of the few provinces in Canada where Ombudsman oversight does not include essential health services like hospitals, air ambulance, child care services, and family and children services. Aren't these services worthy of being held to account? We are calling for Ombudsman oversight. We have an Ombudsman program here in this province where we spend millions of dollars, and yet we're not prepared to allow that to be extended to these essential services. If the government wants to admit that what happened at Ornge was a mistake—that it can be rectified, that they can learn from this mistake—why do they ignore the most important step, which is Ombudsman oversight? That should be the goal here.

What purpose does it serve to withhold Ombudsman oversight? Without including it, this bill is a wasted opportunity, and it's just really a public relations exercise,

something to make the public think that things are really being fixed. The government, when they brought this bill forward the second time, had the opportunity to actually make a lot of changes to it, but they chose not to, because Bill 11 isn't designed to try and fix the problems at Ornge—to ensure accountability, to ensure transparency of a publicly funded agency—or to protect those who were courageous enough to come forward four and five years ago to talk about the problems. Some of them lost their jobs and didn't get their jobs back. The government needs to be dealing with that in a timely and effective way.

When you look at the specific items in the bill, there's a pattern that emerges. For instance, the bill will change the incorporation from the feds to the province. This is a direct response to the Minister of Health's claim that the ministry could do nothing about Ornge because it was under federal jurisdiction.

Interjection: A red herring.

Ms. Cindy Forster: A red herring; you're right, and I don't think that—

Interjection.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Absolutely. New Democrats are also concerned about the additional powers being granted to the ministry. The ministry had some of those powers, but they chose not to use them at the time. Unprecedented powers will shift the importance of this out of the hands of the community and into the hands of the ministry, and it will give them less of a say for themselves. If they didn't act before, how can we trust that they will act in the future? We don't think that this bill is actually giving Ontarians what they need.

Does allowing the government to actually appoint representatives at a board at Ornge help increase accountability to the people of Ontario? Or allowing the minister to issue directives to Ornge—does that increase the accountability to the people who live in this province? Does giving the ministry the power to amend the accountability agreement without consultation of the public increase the accountability to the people of Ontario, and does it increase transparency? The answer, I'm afraid, is no.

Just like before, only the ministry is privileged to any information. The opposition parties will still be in the dark; the people of Ontario will still be in the dark. The only way to bring transparency, accountability and the trust of the public back is to grant oversight of the Ombudsman and to extend the scope of the bill so that a scandal like Ornge is prevented from ever happening again. This is what the people of Ontario want, and it's up to the government to listen to them; they are the people who elected us.

1540

Unfortunately, they haven't been listening, and the list of grievances against the government continues to grow: 20,000 people at the Niagara Health System. Ridings in the north: The member from Nickel Belt talked about the holes in the bill being big enough that you could actually fly an air ambulance through them. The people of the

north are not being served. Marineland: 85,000 people signed a petition, and there's no action.

In my community, certainly, there are huge grievances against the government with respect to our health care services—not only the Niagara Health System but our access to mental health services.

So I look forward to this bill getting to committee and joining in the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much to the member for Welland.

Questions and comments addressed to the member for Welland?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, Mr. Speaker, I repeat it: The former board of directors and the former CEO failed us all. They failed the employees, they failed the patients and they failed Ontarians. It's unbelievable listening to what was discovered in the former administration of Ornge; it's an embarrassment.

But thanks to the Minister of Health, who put forward some discipline in the new Ornge company. She also has directed Ornge to take all available steps to recover misappropriated funds. So you should say thank you to her for doing that.

But on a very positive note, Ornge is now well into a new chapter. We have a new board of directors; we have a new CEO. It is now a culture that puts patients first, respects taxpayers, and values transparency and accountability. I'm pleased to hear that the new Ornge, the new board of directors, the new CEO—they are all co-operating with the Ministry of Health to redress the situation at Ornge.

Ornge's new performance agreement protects taxpayers. That's what we want. We want that the difficult, hard-earned dollars from taxpayers in Ontario are being used to improve health care in Ontario.

I want to thank the Minister of Health, and I want to make sure that we go to committee so that we bring—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to address the comments from the member for Welland. She stressed very clearly that one of the things that we're calling for, that the New Democrats are calling for: Ombudsman oversight.

I heard the member opposite talk about, "This is the new agreement." This might be a new agreement under their definition, but if nothing has really changed for oversight, it's the same agreement with no accountability to the public of this province.

Unfortunately, we have had an example like that in my riding recently. I mentioned it this morning, that there were some patients, 665 patients in London Health Sciences, who were treated with chemotherapy drugs that were not adequate. That really worries my constituents, Speaker, and this is why our ears have to be perked up, as I look across the aisle and I look at the members there. Perk your ears up, because here's the wake-up call, here are the alarm bells, here are the whistle-blowers. We're

telling you that Ombudsman oversight is what is needed for the health department. If nothing else, listen to that.

We've had the example of Ornge, and now we have other examples that happened. I understand that the minister—I'll give her some credit, because I've known the minister for a very long time, so I understand she's passionate and compassionate about that. But really, so are we on this side of the House when it comes to oversight. We ask that you just please listen to that and really consider it, so if this bill does go to committee, I hope we can actually have a sincere and serious, honest conversation about what truly Ombudsman oversight means to the public and to their health care system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Just to add a few comments to the comments of the previous speakers, particularly the one from Welland.

I have to say that I caught some of the comments from one of the previous speakers where they say, you know, you've been talking about 11, 12, 13 hours, but still we want to do our own 10 minutes. By all means, Speaker; we are in here—this is our responsibility. Our job is to speak in this House and speak our minds.

The question we hear from the other side is that they want to see the bill proceed to the committee level. You know the workings of the legislative agenda here as it works, and we are saying, "If you want to make some improvements to the bill, this is not the place. It's got to go through the various committees, and that is where you make those recommendations and bring the bill back."

With all due respect, Speaker, I have to say that yes, the oversight was a problem, but the minister has been very responsible in making quick changes at the proper time.

And let me say some of the other things that the bill will do, if we were to send it to committee and bring it back and make some of these changes. Some of the things have already been done, Speaker. The minister has appointed a new patient advocate. We have new medical interiors in its helicopters. We have expanded service to Thunder Bay. We have established a dedicated patient flight service for northern Ontario. We have created a whistle-blower policy as well.

So what else is left to do in there? Perhaps there is much more, but only at the committee level will we be able to bring it back and try and get some more protection for the employees who wish to disclose information and bring it back to inspectors or an investigator or to the ministry; whatever. Only then will we be able to make the bill better. So I hope that this will move on to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and comment directed to the member for Welland, and I look to the member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Me, or—

Interjection: Yes, you.

Ms. Cindy Forster: You go ahead.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Oh, thank you. I thought I was from Welland there for a minute.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Just to be clear, I apologize—you're addressing your comments to the remarks that were made by the member for Welland. That's why I prefaced it that way. Again, I return to the member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I thought you were confusing me there for a second. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on Bill 11. I'm going to be speaking a little later on today, in a few minutes, to be able to make a few comments, but one of the things I've been worrying about with this whole purchase of the new helicopters, one of my major concerns—and I've had some of the whistle-blowers come to me. They've come to me with their concerns about being fired or not if they said anything.

But the one thing that I'm really concerned about is that usually a helicopter has a long lifespan, because they have so many inspections on them. I'm told that because of the problems with being able to handle the cargo inside them, where they have people who need medical attention, that there have been some problems with them. One of my major concerns is that as we move forward in the next few years, we don't see these helicopters being grounded because they're just in too bad a condition to be in the air and have patients.

So I'm hoping that we can sort of address that too, as we move forward with some of the legislation and with some of the committee hearings, that we can actually discuss that and bring in some people who can give us a little more detail on the structure of the helicopters.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Welland for her reply.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and francophone affairs, the member from London-Fanshawe, the minister responsible for seniors and the member from Simcoe North for their comments.

Now, the Premier talks about wanting to kind of work co-operatively with the opposition parties, and I think this would have been a perfect opportunity for her to do that, because she had heard all of our arguments back in September and October. So if she really wanted to work with us co-operatively, she would have instructed the minister responsible for this area to actually put our amendments into the new bill so we wouldn't have had to stand here for 12 or 14 more hours debating this.

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Now, the minister responsible for seniors says that, well, yes, he agrees that democracy is alive here, "But we really should get this into committee where the committee can talk about it." My concern about that is that once the amendments are made, once we get into committee and the opposition parties determine that we're

going to make amendments to the actual bill, will the bill ever see the light of day again back here in this Legislative Assembly? That's what concerns me, because we debated many bills and we made many amendments to bills back in September and October of last year, and they all died with prorogation. So if the government doesn't like the amendments we make to this bill, it may never come back here again either.

I think that if you really want to work co-operatively with us on future bills, you should be making the amendments in advance to bringing them back to us so that we don't have to debate bills for 50 hours at a time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join in the debate on Bill 11, the Ambulance Amendment Act. This bill is the government's response to its self-created Ornge air ambulance crisis. It is what I would call a typical Liberal response. They create a hierarchy of red tape after a problem appears instead of watching what's taking place beforehand. They pass a bill or put in a policy and then walk away and forget about it until it blows up in their faces. Then the taxpayers get to pay for it all.

My colleagues have outlined very well the many scandals that Dr. Mazza and Ornge have created, but I want to address the massive failure of oversight. This bill itself offers only more red tape and bureaucracy, as if new regulations are what it takes to operate the air ambulance service properly. What this government refuses to understand is that the problem is not a lack of regulation but a lack of proper oversight. And given the Liberal record on this issue, more regulation is not likely to lead to better oversight.

We just need to look at the history of air ambulance service in Ontario to see that it is the decisions of the Liberal government that are the problem. The Ornge fiasco is not a problem that this government discovered; it's one it created. Previously, Ontario had enjoyed an air ambulance service that worked behind the scenes to support people throughout the province. It had been providing air ambulance services since 1977. The ministry contracted with private operators to provide air ambulance aircraft, pilots and paramedics, with the ministry directly operating the central air ambulance dispatch centre.

Then, suddenly, the Liberal government decided to give a virtual monopoly to a company that owned no aircraft, either fixed-wing or helicopters, nor knew how to pick a plane that actually works—that doesn't weigh too much, that has the proper headroom to provide services to the patients who are being transported.

Here's what one of the former private operators told the public accounts committee about Dr. Mazza last year: "He sold the province—on the concept that the system was broken, and it wasn't broken...."

It is important to remember that Ornge is entirely a creation of the Ontario Liberal government. Since the Liberals created Ornge in 2005, the operation has suffered from scandals and poor management. Repeated

reports of the Auditor General have pointed this out. In a 2005 audit of land ambulance services, the auditor recommended that the ministry conduct unannounced reviews to ensure consistent quality of service. Even though the law allows the ministry to conduct unannounced quality reviews, the practice of the ministry is to give at least 90 days' notice of inspections. Even with this, about one third of ambulance operations, including Ornge, did not pass their scheduled reviews the first time. Imagine how many might have failed if the reviews had been unannounced. The reviews found such things as aircraft that were not properly stocked with medical supplies and equipment and medical oxygen equipment that was improperly maintained.

Proper oversight of Ornge should have started at the very beginning. Our party has asked, "Why was Dr. Mazza appointed to run Ornge in the first place?" From everything we've heard, he had a good medical record but no experience in the helicopter part of the operation.

The Auditor General's special report on Ornge connects the scandal very clearly with the lack of oversight by the government. The auditor says, "The ministry has a responsibility to ensure that the services it is paying for are being provided cost-effectively and that Ornge is meeting the needs of the public and Ontario's health care system." And what did he find? "[T]he ministry has not been obtaining the information it needs to meet these oversight commitments.... It does not periodically obtain information on the number of patients being transferred or assess the reasonableness of the cost of the services being provided on a per-patient basis." He continues, "[T]he funding Ornge received for air ambulance services increased by more than 20%" between 2006-07 and 2010-11. "[O]ver the same period, the total number of patients transported by air decreased by 6%."

On top of this are the scandals about Ornge selling and leasing back its corporate headquarters through a management company owned by members of Ornge's own senior management; and the helicopters they bought, the patients won't fit in. The list goes on and on, and I'm certain more will come out over time. It makes you wonder: How did the management of Ornge think they could get away with it all? Did they realize the government would never pay attention? Did they see how the Liberals ignored problems at eHealth until that blew up and figured the government would never look at an agency so long as it kept out of the news?

So now we have this bill before the House, which the government says we need because it cannot exercise its oversight otherwise. Yet testimony from civil servants in the committee has shown that the ministry had the power of oversight but just didn't use it. My colleague from Newmarket-Aurora put the question about responsibility for oversight to Malcolm Bates, who is the director of the emergency health services branch of the ministry, which oversees the air ambulance service. Mr. Bates told the committee, "I agree that the Ministry of Health and the emergency health services branch have and had oversight responsibilities and that oversight responsibility was

basically set in line by the Ambulance Act, by the performance agreement and by the transfer-of-payment accountability directive.”

My colleague told the House, “Malcolm Bates testified that he was actually directed by an associate deputy minister not to exercise those responsibilities.” He testified at our committee that he was directed to do whatever he was instructed to do by one Dr. Chris Mazza.

So now we know. The failure of oversight was not just incompetence or laziness; it was a deliberate decision to turn a blind eye to what Ornge was doing. I have a simple question: Why? What interest did the Liberal government have in not paying attention to the activities of Ornge? Who would have been upset if Dr. Mazza had stopped wasting money in mismanaging the ambulance service? No taxpayer in Ontario would have been upset by oversight. No one in this House would have criticized the government for too much time inspecting the actions of arms-length agencies. It's a question I cannot answer.

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It also leads me to a new question. What will the next Ornge be? Which other agencies in the Ontario government are currently run by other Mazza-like characters? Where else in the government is some public servant being told to avert his eyes from what an agency or department is doing?

We know there is a continuing OPP investigation. We know that this bill will not change the issue of oversight. If you can turn your head at one point, you can turn it again. What we are really talking about is an effort to cover this episode in the history of the Liberal government by suggesting that we can legislate morality, that we can make people operate differently. The answer is no, we can't. We depend on the integrity of every member, and every member of the broader public service. What we are witnessing here today, and through this bill, is the erosion of trust.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from York-Simcoe on her comments with regard to Bill 11. We've been here before, after many hours of actually discussing this piece of legislation and the proposed changes within it. I think that I'm in complete agreement with the member from York-Simcoe around the oversight piece. This isn't really a question of new rules and regulations. The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has said that Ornge has already put those structures in place. So what we have before us is essentially a public relations exercise.

What really was missing from the very beginning was true oversight. Most importantly, I think, the government has not yet admitted that they dropped the ball. We have heard excuse after excuse from the other side of the House that it was the Ornge board of directors or it was Mr. Mazza. Instead, we don't have true accountability for what happened with regard to Ornge. Most importantly to the people of this province, I think we don't have any assurance that it won't happen again. It would be well

worth going through this very bureaucratic exercise to rehash the past and revisit past mistakes, because so many were actually made, if we had some assurance that, going forward, the same mistakes wouldn't happen again.

We're all dealing with the fact that a major mistake in the health care sector has already occurred with the mismatched and insufficient chemotherapy doses that were distributed over the last year. So there are big trust issues in the health care portfolio. Unfortunately this legislation, as proposed, does not address those serious trust issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm glad to comment and respond to the member from York-Simcoe. I'm very pleased that this new proposed legislation would provide that strengthened oversight we're all talking about that is needed to ensure a solid future for Ornge's ambulance service.

Yes, much has happened because the government lacked the tools to bring Ornge under control and have that sufficient oversight. As many of my colleagues have said, the trust that the government had in this agency was simply betrayed.

Ornge is now well into a new chapter, and it is on the right path forward. Some of the changes that have already taken place have already been cited here, but I'm very pleased to see that they have appointed a new patient advocate. The fact that they have established a dedicated patient flight service in northern Ontario and created a whistle-blower policy—these are all very important steps. This legislation is the next step in restoring that crucial public confidence in Ornge. It would provide protection for employees who disclose information. It would allow the government to appoint a supervisor just like we do in our hospitals, and it would allow the government to change the performance agreement with Ornge at any time.

These measures really represent a common ground between the government and the opposition, I believe. I look forward to this bill going to committee and being strengthened by the voices of my fellow colleagues on the opposite side. That's what I hope will happen as soon as possible, Mr. Speaker.

I want to take a moment to thank everyone who works in the ambulance services here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You know, we've talked a lot about Ornge over the last couple of years, in fact. One thing I worry about, as we move into the next few months: I'm really concerned about the OPP investigation and where that's going to fall and what we're actually going to see out of that. I'm not sure whether the OPP will make any kind of recommendations, or there may be some kind of charges or whatever may happen.

We're actually coming pretty close to the end of debate on this particular reading, second reading, and then it will go to committee. But I'm almost worried

about even finalizing it now until I actually see some of the results of the OPP investigation, because it might open up a lot of different passages or channels, whatever you want to call it, or new thoughts that we haven't even covered yet.

I know we've covered an awful lot of topics and a lot of questions. The minister certainly has had to answer her share of questions here in the House in the first session and in this session as well. But I'm really concerned about the OPP—when that report comes out from them. I've heard it might be midsummer—I'm not sure if anybody has got any thoughts on that—or within the next few months at least. I'm not sure when. I guess what I'm saying is that as we move for the rest of this spring—we're going to committee, and we'll probably go to third reading—I'm wondering, if something else comes out of the OPP investigation, it might be something to be really concerned about that we could add to that. I think it's worth discussion at least, okay?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I've had an opportunity to address this bill in this chamber within the last few weeks. As everyone who is sitting here knows, we've already gone through extensive debate on this bill.

We've made it clear, and I want to make clear again today, that it is critical for the Ombudsman to have jurisdiction over Ornge. Speaker, over the last few years, I think going back as far as 2010, maybe 2009, our party in the estimates committee, the committee that sits on a yearly basis to allow the opposition an opportunity to question ministers in depth, has raised the whole issue of Ornge and its function. We, in fact, raised at the estimates committee much of what has become part of our knowledge of what went wrong at Ornge. Whistle-blowers came to us. Employees came to us. They said that things were going seriously wrong at that agency. Yet, we didn't get any satisfaction in the estimates committee. It was not until it was blown wide open in the media that an inquiry was, in fact, instituted and action was taken.

We have asked, and we continue to ask, for the Ombudsman to have jurisdiction so that it isn't just a question of us raising a point, a few points, a few questions in estimates or in the House, but giving the Ombudsman jurisdiction to use his or her resources to actually probe such allegations—substantial allegations of wrongdoing and misdirection of funds—so that the public interest is satisfied.

Speaker, it's unfortunate that this bill doesn't reflect that perspective. As written, it's not strong enough to protect the public interest. That means it is going to have to be substantially changed if it has any chance of passing in this chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member for York Simcoe has two minutes to respond.

1610

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to thank the members for Kitchener–Waterloo, York South–Weston, Simcoe North

and Toronto–Danforth for their contribution to the conversation.

I would just start by saying that the question of the OPP investigation that the member for Simcoe North raised is really one that we should keep at the top of our mind because of the fact that—here we are looking at what the government is offering as an answer to the problems when we don't even know the full extent of the problems that are at Ornge. I think that's really an important point.

The member for Toronto–Danforth made reference to the lack of satisfactory responses at estimates, and I think that was certainly one of the points that I felt was most important to make this afternoon: the fact that there have been and there are always a lot of junctures at which oversight can be inserted into a process. As we know from the information provided through testimony at the committee, these were simply overlooked or actually abandoned. To suggest that we can make a law that prevents people from abandoning or overlooking is, I think, somewhat—as one of the speakers said—of a public relations exercise, and I think that there is certainly lots of evidence to give support to the notion that it is a public relations exercise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd like to cover a number of areas in my 10 minutes today, but before I begin I'd like to start off by thanking—I think that we need to, and I think it's been a number of times—the front-line workers at Ornge, because they have, from the beginning, done their utmost to provide excellent care here in Ontario, and the front-line workers should be commended for their efforts. At the heart of the problems at Ornge was an issue of management and an issue of mismanagement, so we shouldn't lose focus on the fact that the true problems at Ornge lie at the feet of management.

When we look at the bill before us, it's very concerning to me—in any area where we debate or we implement bills or laws, we should be looking for prevention as opposed to reaction. Our laws shouldn't be reactionary and we should have a strong focus on ensuring that we put efforts into preventing problems before they occur. In this circumstance, one of my problems is that we are looking at this situation in a reactionary method. Things went wrong at Ornge and, after the fact, we're trying to make it better. We have to keep in mind that much of what happened at Ornge was preventable.

One of the key indicators at Ornge, one of the key signals and red flags that we could have and should have—and I put the blame on the government for this—addressed was salary disclosure. A simple requirement: Any time a transfer payment agency receives money from the province, that agency should be required to disclose the salary of its employees. That basic requirement would have flagged immediately that the CEO of an organization which has an operating budget of \$150 million is earning upwards of \$1 million in compensation.

That should have been—and that was—one of the essential red flags that tipped off that something was going on at Ornge that wasn't appropriate.

That's something that we could do and we should do in every transfer payment agency across Ontario. There are a number of transfer payment agencies that the Ontario government 100% funds or primarily funds, and if we are not vigilant in ensuring that we know exactly what those public sector CEOs are being paid—what the management is being paid—we can't be said to be doing proper oversight.

First and foremost, the issues at Ornge are an indictment of a government that did not take proper steps to oversee precious and scarce resources. Ontario is in a fiscal dilemma, in a position where there are difficult economic circumstances, and that makes every dollar—every precious resource that we have—all the more important to keep tabs on and to have proper oversight on.

There were a number of red flags that were before this government that the government did not take action on. My colleagues have mentioned the fact that the NDP raised questions in estimates about the salary of Dr. Mazza, and those questions were not answered. It was quite telling that the answers to those questions that were raised years and years ago were actually offered during the committee hearings of Ornge years and years later, which kind of begs the question—coincidentally, those questions that, at the time, Howard Hampton, the leader of the NDP, had asked, were only answered during the actual committee inquiry into the scandal at Ornge—very, very coincidental.

What I don't see in this bill and what I wanted to see—we saw that there were a number of red flags. The Meyers Norris Penny firm was hired to look at problems at Ornge and it flagged many issues similar to the ones that the Auditor General flagged. We saw there were a number of whistle-blowers who came forward and said there were issues at Ornge. We knew that there were questions raised about the salary compensation issues. None of these issues were addressed, and this bill doesn't give us any confidence that there are any systemic or systematic changes in the way the government will oversee other transfer payment organizations.

What I mean by that is, if we had a promise or some sort of guarantee that the government will be vigilant and will ensure that, across the board, every ministry will make sure that they're vigilant in ensuring that salaries are disclosed, that alone would put the minds of Ontarians at ease, that at least we know the salary compensation for people at publicly funded organizations.

If we were given a guarantee that any question raised by the member of the opposition would be answered in a timely fashion when it comes to the scarce resources in our province, that would also give us some confidence. These are systematic or systemic issues that could be addressed so that we're not just looking at one transfer payment organization or agency but we're looking province-wide.

How can we make sure that an Ornge-type scandal doesn't occur again in Ontario? That really should be the question and that should be something this bill gives us some confidence in. If the bill had some mechanisms in place that said, "We will make sure that the government will take regular steps to make sure we have oversight. We will make sure that we have regular consultations with all transfer payment agencies, including Ornge"—something of a more systematic or systemic nature would give us some confidence that this would be a change or a step in the right direction, to have oversight across the board.

Another issue that came up during the committee hearing is that the current CEO came forward and presented a very strong case for the steps that he's taking to make sure that Ornge is on the right track. A lot of the things he had to say were good points, very strong points. He indicated a number of steps that the current organization is taking in terms of meeting with the ministry regularly, providing updates, providing reports on a monthly basis, some daily reporting and some weekly reporting.

He also indicated that there's a new performance agreement. We all know about the amended performance agreement. I put to him the question, "All these changes that took place, the fact that you have a new performance agreement, an amended agreement, you have all these reporting conditions and reporting practices in place—did you need a bill to do these things?"

He said, "No."

"Would a bill stop you or encourage you to continue doing this?"

He said, "No, a bill or a law would not change what I'm doing right now. I'm going to continue to have this reporting. I'm going to continue to have a good relationship with the ministry, and I'm going to continue to provide feedback and reporting on what we're doing."

To flesh out my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo's point, yes, this bill, in a lot of ways, is simply window dressing, because all the steps that are currently being taken at Ornge are being taken without any bill being passed. There's no bill passed right now, yet we have reporting. There's no bill passed right now, yet we have an organization that is providing full salary disclosure of all their employees. Really, why is there the necessity for the bill?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's about the future.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care indicates it's about the future. What would help us to have some confidence in the future would be if the government had a list of proposals on how they would guarantee that they would fulfill their oversight requirements, by saying, "Yes, we will make sure that every transfer payment organization in Ontario is going to disclose their salaries, and we'll ensure that they disclose their salaries. We'll ensure that we have regular contact with and reports received from every transfer payment agency." Those would be future-oriented goals that would be more expansive and would

create more confidence in this province. That's what we want to see.

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We want to see that there is a guarantee that, if we have a piece of legislation, the government would actually utilize the tools in that legislation. In fairness, the previous performance agreement had a number of tools, but those tools weren't utilized. The previous performance agreement had a number of areas where the government could have applied pressure on Ornge to find out and to ascertain certain things that were going on, but they weren't used. We could have any type of legislation pass in this House, but if there's no requirement on the government to actually utilize that legislation, to actually take advantage of the tools and the mechanisms and the pieces of the act that are before it, then what confidence do we have in that bill having any benefit whatsoever for this province, if we don't have any commitment or guarantee that the government will actually use those tools?

So we come to this bill and some of the problems that we see in it. One of the major concerns that has been brought up time and time again, and I'll close off by addressing this again, is that we want to have transparency. Transparency is at the heart of uncovering any scandal. It's at the heart of uncovering any issue where we have a misuse of funds. The great work of André Marin and the Ontario Ombudsman's office has been shown time and time again to have uncovered serious issues. I ask the government to seriously consider ensuring that this bill has Ombudsman oversight to make sure that we have some true transparency here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member from York West.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, the only way that we can ensure that the bill proceeds in its natural course is to go to the committee level and bring it back with some recommendations that will suit the desire of the opposition. We have heard many times in the House that the Minister of Health has taken quick action to correct some of the measures; for example, by installing Dr. Andrew McCallum as the new CEO of Ornge, and many other changes that have taken place as well. But something that perhaps the opposition would like to see, Speaker, and something that has not been mentioned before is that in addition to this legislation as it is proposed, the government is also proposing to make Ornge retroactively subject to freedom-of-information requests. I think this is a very important step that the government is proposing. It's something very important that I think we should all be looking for. It's something that all the members of the House should be addressing and looking for when the bill goes through the committee level there. This is an important step, Speaker, with respect to making it very transparent.

We have heard before that it has been difficult to try to get information, and we are the ones—the minister has been proposing and the Premier has been saying, "You know what? We are willing to propose that we make

Ornge retroactively subject to freedom-of-information requests." I think this is a good step. I think it's one of those things that we should be bringing forward to be debated at the committee level, and then bring the bill back. I would hope that at that stage we can move on instead of letting the bill die. I would hope that we would put enough improvements into the bill that we can bring it to the House, approve it and send it forward.

I thank you, Speaker, for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to kind of continue on that train of thought that I had. We've heard comments referring to the Ombudsman and Ombudsman oversight. That does make a lot of sense, and I have to admit that I think André Marin has done a pretty good job in most of the reports that he's come out with as the Ombudsman.

However, this particular case is very complex, and it goes back to some of the people who actually came to me, Mr. Speaker, as whistle-blowers. I'll mention this a little bit later on, but they were very, very concerned about finding out that they'd actually passed on information to MPPs.

I heard that they had actually called in the OPP to do an investigation on this, and I'm hoping—I still have this thought in my mind that maybe we've got all this discussion, and I'm hoping now there's good oversight while this debate is going on and the committees are hearing and we're waiting on the Ombudsman for all these reports.

However, I really am concerned about what will come out in the OPP report. Will there, in fact, be charges laid or will there even be some recommendations? I don't know how a report like that comes out. I've never heard of the OPP giving a report of this magnitude on such an interesting case. So on one hand, I'd like to see the legislation passed and know that we've got a path for the future, but on the other hand, I'm really concerned that if the OPP report comes out later on, there may be things in that report that should have been included in the legislation. I think that's something we should be concerned about.

It would be interesting to hear some of the thoughts of the government members or anyone else on that particular thought because I think it does make some—at least an opportunity to debate because this is a very interesting case when the OPP are actually involved in it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for raising some important issues around this debate, particularly the ones around compensation and why we didn't know about the compensation practices and how that could continue on for four or five years.

Certainly, we've talked a lot this past year about capping CEO salaries. When we have publicly funded agencies and we have CEOs making in excess of a million dollars, there is something wrong with the system.

We should have some policies in place, some practices in place that actually prevent boards of directors from allowing CEOs to take loans to buy houses or do renovations on their houses. I mean, that should just be something that can't happen.

And I ask you, do you do a better job because you're making \$1 million instead of \$400,000? I think not. I know there are many front-line and middle managers who work in the health care system who make far less than the actual front-line workers because of overtime and weekend premiums and shift premiums and those kinds of things that health care professionals actually have the right to because they work 24 hours, seven days a week. I would suggest that those managers do a great job even though they're sometimes not making anywhere near what the people are making who they supervise or manage.

I think the issue of compensation is a very important one. When we're dealing with taxpayers' dollars, we need to be very vigilant about how those dollars are spent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to rise in response to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton's comments.

First of all, I'd like to say that it's very clear to me that Bill 11 is an important and needed piece of legislation. It is modelled on the Public Hospitals Act. It includes the same type of provisions in terms of patient safety and fiduciary responsibility of the board as we have with our public hospitals. This is going to be a very important safeguard in terms of air ambulance service provision in this province.

I think we all acknowledge that mistakes were made in terms of Ornge and what I have described before as a rogue agency: a board of directors that neglected their responsibilities. Certainly, our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, when she heard about the Auditor General's concerns with Ornge, acted immediately and she called in the OPP. She made sure that the board of directors resigned, as did management personnel, and introduced a new interim CEO.

As I'm a member of the public accounts committee, we've been hearing now as to what's been happening at Ornge in the last year since control was taken back, in fact, by the new board of directors and the new CEO, and I've been really impressed. Dr. Andrew McCallum, the former chief coroner of the province and now the CEO, is making solid steps. Their quality improvement plan is showing these kinds of positive steps in terms of response times, improvements to patient safety and accountability to the public. We need Bill 11. The sooner we get it to committee, the better.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd like to thank all the members for their comments and for participating in the debate. I appreciate your input.

Again, we're left with a bill before this House that, as it is, I still will contend, is simply window dressing. The underlying problems have not been addressed, and I hope that the members here today can take back—the take-home message from my comments is that we need to make sure we implement something in this province that's systemic, not just a bill, one at a time, that reacts to a problem that occurs. Let's be—

Mr. Grant Crack: Proactive.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: —proactive. Thank you very much. That's exactly what I was looking for. Let's be proactive. Let's make sure that we prevent these types of scandals in the future. Let's make sure that we take steps to ensure that they don't happen—and we can; there's a very easy mechanism. The simplest way we can ensure that there is not an abuse of the scope and nature of Ornge, the easiest thing we could do—because time and time again, everyone has said the number one red flag was when we saw the CEO compensation get to the level it got to. That was the major red flag.

What we can do is implement a procedure that the government, with any transfer payment agency—if you receive funding from this province, if you receive, as a primary source of your funds, funding from the province of Ontario, then you must disclose the salaries of all your employees. That, at a minimum level, would give us some oversight to know what's going on with our precious dollars, to make sure that the dollars, the resources are being allocated to front-line workers and are being allocated to providing service for Ontarians. We can ensure that. That's one level of oversight that, at a minimum, we should implement across the province. I hope that can be something that the government takes to heart and, in the future, we implement here in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate? I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. You're having an extended sojourn in the chair today. I can't imagine why. Actually, I do know why.

Anyhow, I've been listening to this debate, not just today but for some time, and it reminds me—I was just talking to my friend from Sarnia–Lambton here, Mr. Bailey—of an old Ernest Tubb song. We're going back a little bit here, but he had a song that was called "Another Story, Another Time, Another Place." We just keep hearing from these Liberals Another story, another time, another place. One day this is the story, and the next day we have a different story.

It's interesting: I'm listening to the Minister of Community Safety today talking about all of the changes that have been made at Ornge and how it's all fixed. It's all working. But then, on the other hand—another story, another time, in another place—we're told that we absolutely need this piece of legislation to get the job done.

What we've got here, quite simply, is—the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton had some good points, and he used the word "proactive." Well, I'll tell you, there's one thing that Liberals are extremely proactive in, and

that is protection, protecting their you-know-what. That is their political MO: Whatever has to be done to protect themselves politically, they will do. Here they are, holding up Bill 11—and I have a copy of it here. There's not a lot to it. Bill 11: They're holding it up and they say, "This is what we need."

Yet they didn't really need it that badly, I guess, because just last fall they decided to prorogue the House, shut her down, batten down the hatches, lock the doors. All winter, we were closed. Right up until the middle of February, we were closed. So they really needed Bill 11. You see, at that time it was Bill 50. They really needed it, yet they shut this place down because they didn't really care.

So here we have it. They wanted that new piece of legislation, and the reality is it died on the order paper because they prorogued the House. But they could just as easily have brought in a programming motion that said, "This bill lives, and we'll pick it up where we left off when the House returns." But no, it was such a priority that they let it die.

Now, here we are back, and they're saying we shouldn't be debating the bill. We shouldn't debate the bill. This is their new story now. We shouldn't debate the bill—another story, another time, another place. Well, the standing orders provide for the ability of every member in this Legislature to debate the particular bill before it. The government can bring in a time allocation motion after six and a half hours. They choose not to, yet they chastise the opposition parties for continuing to voice their views on this particular piece of legislation—not only on the legislation, but why we're here debating the legislation.

There is only one reason that Bill 50, now Bill 11, ever came forward: because of a scandal at Ornge, a scandal that has cost this province hundreds of millions of dollars. In my mind—no question about it—criminal acts have taken place. How Chris Mazza is a free man, I don't know. He should be in jail. You know, people go to jail for stealing a loaf of bread. This guy has robbed us blind, enriched himself, and he's still out there on the lam somewhere, waiting for some police probe that now has taken well over a year to finish their investigation. Please, Speaker, there's not a person out there who doesn't believe this person ripped off the people, enriched himself, hired his girlfriend, a ski instructor, and made her a vice-president at Ornge. I mean, the scandal just goes from one thing to another.

Let's look at what they did at Ornge to enrich themselves, okay? They bought a headquarters for \$15 million. But then they remortgaged it through an entity for \$24 million. The \$9 million was then sent to another corporation of which the board of directors of Ornge were the shareholders. You want to talk about Bernie Madoff? I mean, he's jealous of these guys. He says, "Hell, if I was that smart, I'd have stayed out of jail." You know, that's what went on at Ornge under the watch of this government.

Ornge started out in 2005. George Smitherman made a sweetheart deal with his buddy Chris Mazza. He said,

"You're going to be the president of this corporation. You're going to run the show, and I'm going to close my eyes. I'm going to close my eyes." When the scandal finally broke—and I've got to take my hat off to our colleague from Newmarket-Aurora, Frank Klees. He was, little by little, digging into this mess and, little by little, getting some incriminating evidence that he could raise in this House. He raised the issue in the House. He was sloughed off: "No problem."

All of a sudden, this stuff started getting bigger. I can't use the word "better"—you know, you use the phrase "bigger and better." No, it was bigger and worse. And you know what? It went from worse to worse. That's what happened. The government on the other side, Premier McGuinty and the Minister of Health, Ms. Matthews, shrugged their shoulders and put up their hands. All of a sudden, they couldn't ignore it, and then they pretended that, "Well, we don't really have oversight over Ornge." Oh, tut, tut, tut. Then the auditor did his report and clearly indicated that the ministry did have oversight over Ornge and simply failed to do its due diligence. The ministry failed to do its due diligence.

But who is the head of the ministry, Speaker? In my mind and, I think, in the minds of most of the people out in TV land watching this, the head of the ministry is the minister. So when the ministry fails to do its job, we're not suggesting that it's the minister's job to go in there, do a forensic audit of the books and check to see whether they're conducting themselves within the parameters of the performance agreement this government signed with them and gave the government the ability to go in and see what Ornge was up to. When Ornge failed to do that, the ministry was negligent. We don't expect that it's the minister who actually goes in and does that, but it is the minister who is supposed to direct their people, to say, "Something's wrong there. Something's rotten in Denmark. Go in there and find out." It took the Auditor General to say, "This thing is rotten."

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That's why they bring out this bill, because it's a smokescreen, Speaker. It is designed to deflect the issue from the ministry and the minister and the Premier of Ontario and to try to say that, well, the legislative ability to conduct proper oversight wasn't there.

This bill isn't necessary. As the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton said in his address earlier, when he was interviewing the new CEO, he concurred that the bill isn't necessary. The bill isn't necessary. All that's necessary, as was the case before Bill 11, as was the case before Bill 50, and as was the case before this scandal broke and before 24 people, including Judy Dearman in my riding, lost their lives—and the possible involvement of mismanagement of Ornge cannot be ruled out. That is what the coroner said: It cannot be ruled out.

I hate to open up this wound for Clyde Dearman in my riding, because he has suffered enough. But before those situations took place, the ministry and the minister still had the right to conduct oversight on Ornge. So let's not pretend that this bill is going to change the world. It's

designed to protect the government, to conceal their faults, and to hide behind a piece of legislation thinking that's going to heal the wounds.

Ornge was a disaster, and as long as this ministry and this minister don't accept responsibility for it, then the people of Ontario have not been treated properly and fairly with regard to a final adjudication of what this disaster caused.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to talk to the point that the member from Renfrew was talking about: that this government wouldn't admit their part in this fiasco.

As mentioned by the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, in spite of the fact that in the estimates committee there were questions upon questions in 2010 to be answered, they still went unheard. This government ignored those warning bells.

They also ignored the fact that there was a freedom-of-information request that was put in for Chris Mazza's salary. That was presented to this government, and that, right there, would have been a wonderful tool that they could have implemented at that point. We would have had disclosure a lot quicker than now, and we wouldn't be in the House—and this is an important issue—to regurgitate it over and over again, from the last session, the 40th session, to the 41st session now.

I would have loved to have had this bill previously, Bill 50, resolved back then so we could have a full conversation, go to committee and have some conclusions. But that didn't happen.

One small thing, and I'll give the government a little breadcrumb. One small thing that it is doing is giving us the freedom of information now. That is a small piece of some kind of accountability, but it's not enough. As we've said before, the Ombudsman is the key to a full transparency in this particular instance.

I do agree that it should be a full scope, where departments have the funds transferred to them. But if we want to compromise, if we want to get to a middle ground, let's put Ombudsman oversight in Ornge. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Oak Ridges-Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to some of the comments made by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

First of all, I want to reiterate again that when the minister was made aware of the Auditor General's findings, she took strong action. She called in the OPP. She ensured that there was a new board of directors at Ornge and new management staff. They've been taking some very positive steps to improve Ontario's air ambulance system. Certainly, the advice of the Auditor General has guided many of the actions that are now being undertaken to improve operations and restore confidence in Ornge.

Certainly, Bill 11 is one of these important measures that we're taking. Certainly, it is a good bill. It's modelled on the Public Hospitals Act. It contains many

of the same provisions that ensure patient safety and good workplace relations that in the future will be there with our air ambulance system, things like hiring a patient advocate that can work with families and patients to address their concerns—it's a wonderful step forward, whistle-blower protection; and, of course, the opportunity to potentially appoint a supervisor by the minister or by cabinet, should the need arise.

These are all very positive steps. I think we're all anxious to get this bill to committee. I think we've heard the same discussion over and over again in this chamber. We're certainly interested in the opposition party's ideas for improvement on this bill, and I look forward to the conclusion of this debate and getting Bill 11 to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and make a few comments on the remarks from the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I think he took us through quite a trail of the lack of oversight that was given by the minister and the ministry staff of Ornge.

Obviously, this Bill 11 is only a resurrection of Bill 50, as a number of people have said. This bill is a way to give cover to the single biggest weakness that perpetuates the existing sector of the air ambulance service rather than recognize what was flawed in the first place and that it requires direct oversight by the Ministry of Health.

The bill also references whistle-blower protection, but the scope of that protection is very limited. The bill imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who can approach with that information. The legislation ought to provide for a formal process to the Ombudsman that will ensure proper protection will be followed, but it fails to do that.

The bill, as the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke also said, is an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister had the power from the first days of Ornge, when it was first created, to provide that accountability and oversight of the original board right from the very beginning. The minister had that power to intervene at Ornge under the original Ornge performance agreement as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act. Article 15 of the original performance agreement gave her those powers of intervention.

I think, as the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke also said, this is another example of another story, another place, another time. As we think about this, there's a number of these scandals that have come up from time to time. I think, as we do our due process here today in this debate and a number of people are going to speak to different aspects of this bill and the lack of oversight, I'm sure that the people of Ontario will have a better feeling for what took place here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Well, you know, at a time where we have 6,000 people on a wait-list for home care services in this province, we've got hospital services

being cut and we have hospital budgets being frozen—there was just a report this morning that I heard on the CBC, where they surveyed thousands of nurses across this province, and 25% of those nurses said that they would tell their family and friends not to come to the hospital they're working in and to go somewhere else; another 50% or 60% of them saying that they are burnt out and overworked because of the overcapacity in the beds in our hospitals here in the province and because of the overtime that they have to work because of all of these cuts—that we would be worried about how we spent these Ornge air ambulance health dollars. We don't even know, at this point, how many millions of dollars were actually wasted. We're guessing. But as other members have spoken about today, the shell game—it will be interesting, at the end of the day, once the OPP has finished their investigation, to see how many millions of dollars could have actually been spent on seniors, on sick people who are waiting for home care services, who are waiting for physiotherapy, waiting for all kinds of services out of this health care system instead of having their money wasted because of a lack of government oversight on a program that funds millions of dollars to the air ambulance system here in the province.

As I said when I spoke for my 10 minutes, what people want is a reliable service that is accessible and timely and where they can actually do CPR in the ambulance.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his two-minute response.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I want to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Oak Ridges–Markham, Sarnia–Lambton and Welland for their comments. I wish I had a little more time, because I haven't even gotten into all of the mess. I'm not even talking about the fact that these clowns bought helicopters that wouldn't work—they're too heavy—and some of them wouldn't even accommodate the patients if they were suffering from a cardiac incident. It's like this was just a massive—oh, I can't say that here. It was a massive mess.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Yeah, it was a mess.

But to the comments of the member from Oak Ridges–Markham: She'd like us to just move on like nothing happened. Well, the way it works in society, I say to the member for Oak Ridges–Markham, is when you do wrong, you can receive forgiveness, right after you do your time. We don't just say to the people who go through our court system, "Oh, well, look, everything's fine now. Just forget about it. Forget about the fact that you robbed that bank. Forget about the fact that you did this or that. We'll just move on." That's what the member wants us to do.

You know what? The honourable thing to do would have been for the Minister of Health to say, "Look, this is my responsibility. This is my ministry. While I don't run

everything personally"—they should have looked at the example of the previous government. When a minister or their people screwed up, they were gone. They were gone. They honourably resigned and, at the very least, spent some time in the penalty box so that the people of Ontario would understand that there is accountability, there is ministerial accountability, and when you make a mess of it, somebody has to pay.

Yes, we're going to have to move on because, you know what? In life, you've got no choice but to move on. But in this party over there, in the Liberal Party, they think forgiveness should come before the penance. Well, it doesn't work that way, Mr. Speaker. Somebody should have paid the price.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Am I able to transfer some more? You know, it was such a heart-wrenching debate from my member from Pembroke, who has been here long enough, longer than I have. He's seen some of these atrocities across the floor.

I've heard people talk about this, I guess the former Bill 50, now resurrected as Bill 11 due to the prorogation. Now all of a sudden, it sounds like it's a panic: "We've got to get this out." But we sat here for four months when we could have gotten down to some real good business and got this through.

It's one of the worst scandals in history. It's hard to rate it against the other scandals over here because really, we're only measuring this in hundreds of millions. To be ranked up there in that class with the other scandals like eHealth or the cancellations of the power plants, you have to be talking about billions, and we're not right there.

We see how this government addresses such a serious issue. One would have expected the minister to immediately take, not credit for it but accountability for it, look into it, step down temporarily, at least until it could be resolved. But we see none of this. We see this bill being put forth—I've heard it called before and I've referred to it myself as the red herring bill. Put up as a smokescreen. Try to give people the impression that you had no say. From the limited witnesses I have heard through the committee, they've said everything but that. This minister—this government—has full rein of what goes on here. It's hard to believe that they want to govern, but they constantly say, "Well, we had no oversight ability. We didn't have the ability to stop cheques." I guess they have lots of ability to write cheques. It's interesting how that goes. And sadly, they're ignoring it. Even when the opposition parties brought it up, they reassured us that things were under control; they knew what was going on. All that did, I guess, was magically defer it till after the election of October 2011.

We heard afterward that the Auditor General had made inquiries and was being blocked; had asked the minister to be involved, and what did we hear? "Well, we had no minister." But clearly, the House rules say that ministers are there till they're reassigned. So that didn't buy it either.

When the Auditor General came back—really, not any interest until the Toronto Star broke the story. Of course, then it was out in public, and they jumped up and, I guess, started flailing and looking for reasons why this failed. So they called in the police. We've seen that the OPP have been at it for almost a year and a half, and they still haven't been able to interview the witness we asked them to look at in the first place. Just delay tactic after delay tactic, and you really wonder, "Is there any interest in getting this right?"

We've put this through a second time—same bill. Obviously, they didn't listen to our comments the first time around. If we want to get to the bottom of this, it looks like the only way to do anything is to change the government.

Witness after witness has testified how this minister had oversight, all the oversight she needed. One thing we have heard from witnesses is conflicts in the testimony: things that are said under oath, so we'd have to take it as a court of law, but the government says different. We hear a simple thing, as from the current CEO: "Have you ever been asked to meet with the minister?" His answer was a definite "Never met; never been asked to meet." It's hard to believe, after more than a year in that role, something of a high-profile role, I would think—Ornge has certainly dominated the news over the last few years—not even a request for a meeting. The next day, of course, the minister said, "Oh yes, we met last week." So you really wonder where we are getting this information. Even if you take that at face value—your first meeting more than a year after being assigned—what's that really telling you?

Ornge is a textbook example of a classic failure: massive lack of oversight; many, many warnings, with the two opposition parties asking questions; being—I don't know what you'd call it—reassured by the government that everything is under control; you've looked into it; but now we hear that they couldn't look into it. So I'm not sure what it was. Either they looked into it and they were happy with it, or they couldn't. We're hearing different stories as we go along.

The minister and her department knew exactly what was going on with Chris Mazza—the air ambulance service. They put him in place; they put the contract in place. Was the contract they put in place that bad that they couldn't—there was no oversight allowed?

It's all a matter of looking at public safety. Right from the bright orange helicopters they were so proud of—bad designs; couldn't do CPR; ordered too many of them. They're hiding them in hangars, trying to sell them. I don't know how you sell something that everybody now knows is defective; the design is faulty. I guess that's just an example of this government: just a faulty government that needs to take accountability for something.

The public relations around this has had a lot of effort put into it: the refusal to create a select committee, making it sound like it was our fault; having to put a contempt motion to actually get the documents, as prescribed by parliamentary law in this country. I guess

some of those laws apply to everybody but the current government, but the Speaker has set them straight.

They talk about protection of whistle-blowers. We hear whistle-blowers here who are being fired, and no interest to reverse that. I don't know how you give the rest of the employees at Ornge any idea that you really are there to look after them.

But this is not just the first file. We talked about this government and the Green Energy Act, the Auditor General's report and, again, just after the election, talking about how it was up to this government—you know, it was their responsibility to let people know what this file was costing. They had no interest in that, and we see that today. They contradict the very independent report by the Auditor General that talked not about the millions or hundreds of millions but the billions of dollars wasted.

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What's worse, we're giving the money to our competition, to the neighbouring municipalities and jurisdictions that are actually in competition with us. They're attracting our businesses. Whether we look at Xstrata in Timmins moving to Quebec because they're getting all that free hydro from Ontario—they can offer it to attract 700 jobs and the tax money that goes with that.

It's time that this government takes credit or takes ownership of some of the issues here. Every day, they talk about the number of jobs they've created and how great it's been since the recession. But, you know, the figures don't add up. StatsCanada has been telling us for 75 straight months now that our unemployment rate is above the national average. So where do they get these magical jobs? We see again last month another 58,000 jobs lost; 5,700 manufacturing jobs. Something's not adding up. There's a good reason why they prorogued the government. It was to get away from these questions. I guess when you don't have the answers, you've got to do something.

Mr. Rob Leone: If you don't have the answers, then make them up.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes. And I guess they couldn't make them up anymore—that's a good point—because people were starting to see through them. They couldn't stand the hot water—you know, let things cool off. I guess that's one thing that has worked. It has cooled off for them. But it's our job as opposition to bring these things up.

Oversight: The latest eco tax increases: I mean, 2,200%. When you present that to the minister, the answer is, "Well, we have no say in that. We don't know anything about it." If you don't know anything about it, if you have no say in it, where is the oversight? This is your ministry, your regulations. If they're not following your intentions, then get rid of them. From my understanding in talking to the farming industry, there was no discussion with the stakeholders; just the announcement that the fees were going up 22%.

It's interesting. I had a phone call from a tire dealership in my riding; I won't say where. He was saying that he's going to be forced to move down the road about four

kilometres, because at those prices, nobody is going to go out and buy his tires. He can move into Quebec and he can sell these tires and not charge the tax. I guess they're able to recycle the tires and they're able to sell them at the same price we do, but they don't have the eco tax. So you can imagine, you can buy a combine tire from him at \$1,300 a tire—you're talking \$5,200 for duals on the front—or you can go there and pay nothing.

There is no forethought put into this. All we're doing is closing down our businesses. Actually, you know, it's a wonder we don't get a letter of thanks from Quebec, because we're really doing them—whether we're removing 700 jobs in Timmins or the small tire companies around in my riding that just can't make a go of it because they can't afford to pay the taxes that this government is laying on them.

Anyway, there's just example after example—I guess we're running out of time here—of places where there's lack of oversight. This is not the first time, and I guess, with this government, it won't be the last.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and respond to parts of some of the comments by the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. Something that he said actually stood out for me. He said that the only way to deal with this, to get this straight, is to bring down the government. We have a bit of a different mindset over here. We're trying to hold the government to account, because that's the job of the opposition. Also, we're more concerned, actually, about getting some real results through this process.

Let's actually talk about one good thing that came out of this process, and that has to do with providing whistleblower protection to air ambulance providers. You know, those people are on the front line. They have the real hard jobs. They came forward and they tried to raise awareness of this issue. At the time, the government didn't listen. Actually, nobody was listening. Thank goodness for the media, and then finally we made some progress. Even Marineland employees who were here today—they've come forward with concerns about animal cruelty, and what has happened? They're in court. They have no protection whatsoever. So if anything good came out of this process, it's whistle-blower protection to those front-line workers, but it needs to be more comprehensive.

Let's talk about what's not in this bill. There's still no oversight of Ornge by Ontario's Ombudsman. It's still not granted, and the Ombudsman himself, André Marin, has expressed strong concern that his office will continue to not have oversight of Ornge. He has said that without his oversight, there will be no credible accountability. The patient advocate role reports to Ornge's vice-president, not the public or even the board of directors.

So, here we are. I mean, there's lots of talk about trying to make it better. We want that, but why not do the right thing at the very beginning? Earlier, I think it was very telling. The Minister of Health said, "What about

the future? This is about the future." I think we all know in this House that this piece of legislation is about the past and about changing the channel on Ornge, and we all have a collective responsibility to make it better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: The sad thing, in discussing this particular piece of legislation, is that a very few people make the rest of the people, including us politicians, look bad, because most of the people at Ornge are hard-working, honest people, doing their job. And we really shouldn't resort ourselves to pass a piece of legislation as it is, or better, when it comes back—there shouldn't be any need for that if we had no problem with all the employees. But, unfortunately, Speaker, we are human, and sometimes the human side takes over. But the fact is, the legislation proposes some important changes.

The member just mentioned, for example, protecting the employees from bringing information out either to the government or investigators or to the media, whatever, and why not? Why shouldn't we do that? We said that we can appoint a supervisor or investigators, and why not?

During the various questioning, one thing that came on very often: information, getting information. How come we cannot get information? So this piece of legislation contains exactly that, that in addition to what we are proposing, the government is also proposing to make Ornge retroactively subject to freedom-of-information requests. This alone would go a long way in providing necessary information not only with Ornge but with any other piece of legislation.

So I can appreciate—I was listening to the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, and I hope that we can move on this piece of legislation, bring it back, bring it even better and move on with it, Speaker, and I thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to my colleague from Glengarry south—

Interjection: Stormont—

Mr. Bill Walker: Stormont whatever; anyway, Jimmy Mac. I can never get his out. It's a challenge.

He brings a lot of good points to this House, and he's always bang on. He sits and takes copious notes when other people are talking. He's been here all day, listening to everyone. What he brings up is a really true, valid fact. What he talks about is, where is the accountability on the other side of the House? This is a boondoggle of boondoggles.

Frank Klees, our member, raised issues way, way back, and all we keep getting is, "We've changed house. Someone else made a mistake. We've changed him out." Well, how many times are we going to hear this? It's back to the gas plants, and the campaign team member made the decisions there, and we still don't get any apologies for that, but we've cleaned house again and now we've brought in a new leader.

We just can't accept this anymore, Speaker. What we have to get back to is, what are we doing to serve the

people of Ontario? What are we all doing, 107 people in this House if everyone ever gets here every day—and ensure that we do our jobs every day, that we represent those people who gave us the privilege and honour of representing them in this hallowed hall. We need to ensure that things like Ornge are going to always serve the people first. We're not going to be creating bureaucracies upon bureaucracies. We're not going to create things where people are getting patted at the end of the day and getting basically rewarded for poor management and poor behaviour.

What we need to do is ensure that there's accountability. Who's going to pay for the mistakes that have been made with this? This bill does absolutely nothing to correct the situation that we found ourselves in. It does absolutely nothing to ensure that another Ornge boondoggle won't happen on their watch yet again.

What we need is, first and foremost, for the governing Liberals to step up and apologize to the people of Ontario. They need to ensure that we're talking about things that are actually going to stop and prevent this from happening again in the future, and they need to always put the people of Ontario first with everything they do, rather than their partisan needs.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and comment.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: One of the things that we're seeing is that we all agree on a number of things here, and I think that's a positive sign. We agree on the fact that there is a need for transparency and accountability, and we agree that Ontarians deserve no less than that. Now, it's a matter of, how do we achieve that? How do we make sure that this is not just a one-off situation where we see a problem, we react to it quickly and brush it under the table?

We need to make sure we do something long-lasting, something meaningful, something that will actually make sure that every single precious dollar that's spent here in Ontario is spent effectively and meaningfully. That's why I repeatedly say that we have to make sure that we think beyond just this example, this scandal, and we look to ways of preventing and being proactive. That's really the direction we need to head in with any initiative here in this House, particularly when we have fiscal difficulties and economic restraint. We have to make sure that we stretch each dollar effectively. To do that, it's even more important that the government oversees each and every agency that it provides funding to.

That's why, again and again, we have to make sure we implement systemic changes—not just one-off change—not just for Ornge but for every transfer agency. We need to make sure that these steps are taken in a way that we have some confidence that the government will actually use the tools to make sure that they protect each and every dollar that's spent here in Ontario, and that every resource is committed to front-line care, every resource is committed to protecting and caring for and ensuring the good health of the people of Ontario. The people of

Ontario deserve no less than our best efforts to ensure that we do our utmost to protect each and every precious resource for their benefit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his reply.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I hope my member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has been listening to that.

I want to thank, Speaker, those who spoke. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo talked about real results. I guess I can't agree with that. I don't think we've seen real results here, because without accountability, without taking responsibility, I don't think that we're going to see real results. It really comes down to that they've always had the oversight that they needed; we've heard that many times. But you're going to have to want to do it. You're going to have to not want to hide it from the people. When you're trying to hide something, the oversight's not there.

The minister for seniors talked about front-line workers and, yes, they are good workers. There is no shortage of them trying to contact us because, in their efforts to get the word out that there were things rotten in Denmark, as somebody said earlier, they were getting nowhere. When they came to us, what happened? They were threatened with lawsuits and firing. I mean, this is what we're seeing for transparency, and it's quite scary to see that happen in this province.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound talked about the gas plants and the Premier. One thing we've never heard is an apology; we've never heard anybody accept responsibility. Lots of people are being blamed, even the campaign team, even though some government members are chair and co-chair. But it's always somebody else. You're talking a couple of billion dollars there, and this is a serious problem.

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton talked about the need for transparency, and we can't agree with him more, but we can't support this bill because we don't see a change. I mean, you can't guarantee transparency with a government that will never accept responsibility. What happens is, a person stands up and you make a mistake, you say, "Look, it's my fault. I should've fixed it. I didn't," and move on. That's not something that we've ever heard, I guess in the eight, nine years this government has ever been here. It's something that we've heard in all other governments, but not this one.

Thank you, Speaker, for my time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 11?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to be able to say a few words today on Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. I've actually had a chance to—I've tried to get on a few times on this particular bill, but each time it seems that the time runs out. But I do want to make a few comments on it.

The second reading of it: We have spent a lot of time and certainly we've had numerous questions to the

minister and to the Premiers—both Premier McGuinty and Premier Wynne—on this particular issue, which has really been an issue very important to the people of Ontario.

I just want to back up a little bit and try to figure out—for someone who's been here, I'm in my 14th year now—what I've heard about the air ambulance. I do know we've always had a good air ambulance system in Ontario. Prior to Chris Mazza, prior to Ornge, we've had an air ambulance that, I'm told by people, by doctors and by the medical community, is second to none and it always has been. Then along came whatever the arrangement was with Dr. Mazza to create the Ornge system.

I do remember when the governing party, the Liberals, were in power—in their early years—being at a reception over in the Mowat Block. Some of the staff people were there from Ornge, and it was in their early years. They were basically wining and dining all of the MPPs, and they were giving us an opportunity to go over and to say hello; there were all these beautiful pictures of ambulances and new buildings on the wall, and what a wonderful thing it was. Basically, if I recall, it was almost like we were finally reaching the modern times: “We've got this wonderful system now,” and everything you had before was archaic and outdated. But when I talk to the pilots today, it was never archaic. Someone said earlier, “We tried to fix a system that wasn't broken.” I think, in fact, that is what happened. I'm sure that is what happened. A lot of trust was put in this—these brand new shiny helicopters, Ornge; you can be quite proud of them.

Let's go back again and look at something else. Let's give credit to our pilots and our paramedics and everybody that's on those particular units. They are amazing people, and if it wasn't for them, the problem would still be going on, because they are the ones who came forward; they came forward right across this province, many to people right in this room today, myself included.

But when those things started to happen—basically, when the whistle-blower work started happening—I got a few emails. I was thinking, “Oh, well, it's a disgruntled employee. Blah, blah, blah,” that kind of thing, and then it got stronger and stronger. They'd say, “Can we meet with you?” but the problem was, “Can we meet with you 75 miles away from where you live?” and 75 miles away from where they live, because they did not want to be seen with me, in case it got back to them what had actually happened. So I'm meeting 75 miles away from my house because a guy was afraid of losing his job. That's what actually happened, and there's no question about that. They gave out this information, and then more things started hitting the media.

My friend from Oak Ridges, Frank Klees, he did more—

Mr. Rob Leone: Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Newmarket—Aurora—he did a lot of work in the House, questioning people and meeting with people, and it got stronger and stronger. Then, all of a sudden, what appears out of nowhere, after years, is a

lobby day here at Queen's Park. One of the ministers brought this up in the House; I think it was Minister Milloy who said, “Oh yes, the member from Simcoe North. He was involved in lobbying here.” Well, the guy came to tell me how wonderful Ornge was. Two or three people came; they gave me this glossy brochure, a memory stick—I've still got it upstairs in my office—and a little orange teddy bear with the Ornge logo on it, telling me how wonderful it was. They realized then that they had huge, huge problems at Ornge. The whistle-blowers started to ask questions, the media started to get a hold of it, and they could see nothing but trouble in the future. That was the end of it.

It was funny, though. It was interesting to watch how the governing members tried to twist it as though we knew all about it. We knew nothing about all these things that were going on with these numbered companies. We only knew that they would come with a little orange teddy bear and a memory stick to tell us how good they were. I still wish I could be called to the committee. I hope they can invite me to the committee, because I'm bringing that teddy bear with me, because this is what Ornge was giving out that day. That's all I got out of that, because they didn't give me any other information. I thought it was really interesting to follow that process.

So then we get into the actual units, and I've said this a few times. This is where the paramedics, the staff and the pilots actually informed me. It's why I'm still worried about it today. They tell me they're a beautiful unit—they're fancy orange—and all helicopters, of course, have to be maintained meticulously with proper mechanical inspections all the time, but these particular units don't really carry—they're not really meant to be for the air ambulance business, because it's hard to do CPR on bigger people. There have been problems with the doors falling off and that type of thing. I'm not sure of all the exact mechanical details.

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But for the hundreds of millions of dollars they cost, those are the kinds of investments that you would want to see last for two or three decades, because they are maintained very carefully.

I said earlier today that I certainly hope we're never in a position in the next couple of years where we've got to start throwing these things away or saying they're no good anymore because they just aren't mechanically fit. That's a real concern that I have, along with the fact that the people who are the paramedics and the whistle-blowers basically said, “You know what? These just aren't the right pieces of equipment for our business.” But then, they didn't know what deal was made. They never knew how many they had bought. They didn't know there were a couple stored in Philadelphia or wherever the heck it was, where there were a couple of spare helicopters. They did know about the fancy motorcycles and the boats and all that kind of thing. I have no idea what that had to do with air ambulance work, but you know what? That's in fact what was happening. It was interesting to talk to the whistleblowers on that.

Again, as I said a little bit earlier, I'm really concerned about a lot of things. I look at the oversight. What are we really doing here in Ontario, and how many other Ornge's are there? That's my worry.

For example, I'm worried about these RTOs, these regional tourism organizations. I've brought this up a few times to my friends. I'm trying to figure out what they do. They're for tourism, and I can't find out what they do. I had been told by the one in my area that they were told not to talk to the politicians: "Don't talk to the politicians." So there are millions of dollars flowing into these RTOs, the same as there were millions of dollars flowing into Ornge, and we're not supposed to know about it? These are our tax dollars, the dollars that our families and the people we represent in our communities earn, and we're not supposed to know where that money goes?

I'm also concerned about the LHINs. I get along fairly well with the people in the LHINs in my area, but I'm also told now there are deals made by the ministry outside of the LHINs that the LHINs know nothing about. Obviously, Ornge was one of them. Is that still happening today? I thought when money was spent in a community, it had to go through the LHINs. That was my understanding. That's not the case, I'm told. There are other things happening with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term care right today where the LHIN does not give the approval. It's approved by the ministry, it's announced by the minister and that's the end of the story. The LHIN has nothing to do with that particular announcement.

Of course, I see the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities here today, and he's got the beauty of them all, the college of trades. Talk about transparency there, and how that's going to be impacted and how many dollars have already flowed into that organization that we know nothing about. Basically, all that is is a new membership fee so you can hire cops to patrol yourself. It's like the biggest boondoggle.

It will be interesting to see how the LHIN cops work out. They're going to hire 150 of them or so, to nail every electrician and carpenter they see. They'll go into some hairdressing salon and say, "Someone complained you gave them a bad haircut. You're going to get nailed for that"—this kind of crazy nonsense, in an economy where we're going into debt at \$1.9 million an hour. Give me a break. It's unbelievable.

My time is almost up. I know everybody in the House would like to hear me speak for many more minutes. We've done a lot to worry about this, but right now I'm really concerned about the OPP and their final results and their final report. I hope, in fact, that whatever comes out of that report is what we really, really take seriously, because that is a criminal investigation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to follow the member for Simcoe North in this debate about the bill on air ambulances. As I had the opportunity to say earlier

today, a critical piece missing in this bill, this piece of legislation, is the conveying of authority to the Ombudsman of Ontario to investigate this agency where complaints are lodged by the citizens.

In my riding, I have a constituent, Maria Daskalos whose mother died in a hospital here in Toronto. Her mother, according to my constituent, had been put into a room with a person who was infected with an antibiotic-resistant disease. My constituent complained to all and sundry and the patient advocate, but ultimately, her mother contracted that antibiotic-resistant disease and died. She needed access to the Ombudsman because no one would call for an inquiry—not the hospital, and not the Minister of Health.

Similarly, when it comes to Ornge, there's no question that citizens don't have the resources or the authority to investigate when things are going wrong and actually bring things out in the open. In this situation, the NDP, and most likely the Progressive Conservatives as well, have been asking questions about Ornge for years. It wasn't until it broke out wide open in the media that anything was done whatsoever. We don't have the resources to investigate the kinds of allegations that were brought to us. We ask questions; we press where we can. If in fact, the public is going to have real accountability and real ability to push on this, the Ombudsman has to be given jurisdiction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments on the speech given by the member for Simcoe North?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to make a few remarks related to the comments by the member from Simcoe North—a rather broad-ranging set of comments, I must say. But he did allude to history at one point. I did want to remind the members opposite that the whole structure of Ornge, the whole concept originally in 2002, was in fact initiated by the then Minister of Health from the party opposite.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Who was he?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Tony Clement, I think you will recall, yes. I just wanted to point that out. That has been clearly documented in the public accounts committee.

Now, he also did refer to accountability and transparency. So I'd just like to remind him of the components in Bill 11, which, of course, is the subject of the debate this afternoon, that relate to accountability and transparency.

First of all, the amended performance agreement raises the level of oversight with the following measures and obligations so that there are much tougher funding conditions based on key performance indicators. There are increased audit and inspection powers by the ministry; more detailed financial planning, monitoring, control and reporting obligations; and a committee to advise the board on quality improvement initiatives. In fact, the quality improvement plan that we have looked at at public accounts is a product of that, and it's showing considerable improvement in terms of a number of performance measures.

The new patient advocate will, I'm sure, be able to respond to issues raised by our colleague from Toronto—

Danforth. There will be a complaints process to ensure patient safety, just like the one used in Ontario hospitals. Of course, just to remind everyone yet again, this Bill 11 is modelled on the Public Hospitals Act, which serves Ontarians very well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I do want to comment on the debate and the speech made by my friend the member from Simcoe North, who eloquently, I think, expressed his great frustration about the lack of progress that we have seen on the Ornge file to date.

Certainly, the member from Oak Ridges–Markham stated that this was created in 2002, or that the structure was created in 2002. But the reality is that the Liberals have been in power since 2003. We are now in 2013. The problems that we've seen emerge are problems that emerged largely under their watch. Again, hearing comments like that just speaks to the fact that I don't think they really understand the problems that they have created and the maladministration that they have before them.

This ultimately is about responsibility and ministerial accountability. We have yet to see that. We have yet to see an apology to the people of Ontario for what has happened at Ornge. Lots of public money has been spent. Certainly, we've heard the stories about lavish spending by the CEO and an enormous salary and all the goodies that that administration had.

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But let's be clear: That happened under the Liberal watch. We have still not heard—at least I haven't heard; someone can correct me if I'm wrong—an apology from the government on the administration that they have, or lack of administration that they've had, on Ornge. At the end of the day, that's what I think Ontarians are looking for. They're looking for an apology. They're looking for a way forward, of course, but they want to at least see some remorse on the part of this government. That has not been forthcoming to date.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's time for one last question or comment. No? The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I am glad to have the opportunity to talk on my colleague from Simcoe North and the work he's put in on this file. Unfortunately, as far as he's concerned, he has been here for the almost 10 years to watch the formation of Ornge and a lot of the administration being put in place. It's funny now to hear, after all that work and the credit taken for that, all of a sudden, there's no credit taken for some of the issues.

As one of my colleagues first said to me just a couple of weeks ago, it's not that people would expect you to do everything perfectly; it's how you respond to your mistakes and take accountability for them, apologize for them and move on. Her take on it was that that should be enough. But we don't hear that on this side. We never see any accountability. There seems to always be a smoke-screen go up with the issues of the day, whether it be the

power plants or Ornge. There's a lot of thrashing around and finger pointing, but I think they forget that classic rule, that when you point your finger, there are always three pointing back at yourself.

I think it would take a lot of the wind out of our sails if they would just stand up and say, "We're sorry it happened, and we won't do it again"—stories like "I had no choice" or "I couldn't find out about it" when clearly time after time information was provided to them. Questions were well documented; they were asked in this House, and they were in Hansard. But still, they take the attitude of "How could we know?"

If that's the case, how would any minister be accountable for anything? Are they not responsible for their ministries and everything that goes on? I think that members of our party are quite proud to look back at issues that came up under the former Mike Harris government. Ministers were—the rules were: Step down; do the investigation. Then, if the issue was resolved, you can step back into the portfolio or come back to cabinet. If not, well then, that was your chance.

We're not seeing that in over 13 years. I'm not aware of any of that happening. It's hard to believe it when you hear the billions of dollars that have been wasted in numerous portfolios, that never has there been a minister who has taken any accountability. It's constantly that smokescreen that we've seen. The deficit is always somebody else's fault. Overspending is somebody else's fault. We see numbers provided with no data, but I guess that's the staff's problem.

It's time for this government to take some accountability.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member for Simcoe North for his two-minute response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Toronto–Danforth, Oak Ridges–Markham, Cambridge and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for their comments today. I appreciate this opportunity to say a few words.

The member from Oak Ridges–Markham—I couldn't believe she went back to 2002. I guess it was Minister Clement at the time. I don't think he bought the motorcycle. I don't think he stored two or three helicopters in buildings in the States. I don't think he would have ever picked out or had someone choose these poorly designed aircraft. So I think that's a pretty weak argument. But anyhow, it's always interesting to hear the government after you've made a few comments.

I go back to—you know what? It's oversight. It was very poorly done. It's a boondoggle, the magnitude, like these power plant closures. We've seen all of these boondoggles, one after another—eHealth and it goes back. Now the eco tax. God only knows where the eco tax boondoggle is going to end up. Obviously, all these things have a way of driving jobs away from Ontario. You wonder why we've got a \$12-billion or \$13-billion deficit? Just look at the actions of the government. One thing after another, they keep building—they have people

who would like to invest in Ontario; they no longer invest in Ontario.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, I was sorry to hear about the former GSW, the Beatty plant. That's a sad situation; that's a wonderful plant in Ontario. That tells you the story right there. There's no reason that plant should be moving away or shutting down in this province. It's a tragedy for that to happen. That's why we have to change governments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Cambridge.

Applause.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my good friend from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, who gave me that small applause there for speaking today.

You know, I haven't been in this House as long as some members have, and certainly I can speak in terms of what I've seen from this government in the months that I have been in this Legislature.

There seems to be a strategy that's employed when you are knee-deep in scandal. That strategy seems to be, when you're knee-deep in scandal, what you do is you say, "I'm sorry; we made a mistake. It's okay," and then trot along a piece of legislation—Bill 11 here—to save the day with respect to Ornge. That's what we see as a strategy from this government. They make a mistake, they don't say, "I'm sorry"; when they're knee-deep, they trot out some legislation to make it all go away.

I know we've heard during the debate today—and I've listened intently to many members who have spoken on this matter, that this bill is what they call a PR stunt—a PR stunt in the sense that it really is a smokescreen with respect to avoiding accountability for the wrongs that have happened at Ornge. That to me, Mr. Speaker, is a strategy that I simply cannot accept. I think we're all mature people in this Legislature. I think at the very least, we deserve an apology for the wrongs of this government. We haven't seen it at Ornge, we haven't seen it at eHealth, we haven't seen it with gas plants, and the list goes on and on.

I know my colleagues will talk about their ridings in particular, where there are wind turbines. I'm going to say that there haven't been apologies for placing and setting wind turbines without local consultation. The list is so long, I can't take the remaining time to even go through it. But the reality is that this seems to be the strategy, and it's that strategy that speaks to all that is wrong with this government.

I know earlier today, one of the members spoke about how this issue actually temporarily and briefly came to the estimates committee, where we had the Minister of Health, who spoke at it last year. She spoke briefly, and I know that public accounts is certainly continuing its ongoing negotiation.

But I want to give special mention to the Auditor General's report of March 2012 on the Ornge air ambulance and related services, because it speaks to some of the issues that we are currently going through at the

estimates committee. I'm going to try to get you a page number after I take this clip off—page 6 of the special report. I want to read a quote. From the Auditor General:

"In order for us to fully understand the fiscal and operational context of Ontario's air ambulance services, we requested a number of documents relating to these arrangements. We were given access to only those documents relating to entities that were controlled by Ornge or of which Ornge was the beneficiary." It continues: "We were refused access to the records of any ... other entities," and it goes on and on and on.

Then again, we want some accountability; we want to ask some questions. We seek some assurance that we're going to get some answers. They're not forthcoming. The Auditor General is sent in, and even the Auditor General himself had some issues accessing the kinds of documents that he finds necessary to do his work. I find that particularly troubling, Mr. Speaker. I know the government, in the course of investigating the politically motivated decisions to move some power plants, is ushering in the Auditor General to perform such an investigation, and I hope that in the scope of the Auditor General's investigation, we don't see a couple of paragraphs denoting the problems of accessing documents, as the Auditor General has listed with respect to his report of March 2012 with respect to Ornge air ambulance and related services. We have to be very cautious about these kinds of things and what we're seeing with respect to the two separate issues, but the problems, I think, are similar.

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Another issue that we've discovered under the scope of looking at the politically motivated decisions, to find out who made some decisions on moving gas plants, is the question of, who's driving the bus? Who is making the decisions? Who is saying yes or no? These, actually, are questions that are related to what we're seeing with the air ambulance service as well. At various times, we've heard that it was Chris Mazza who was driving the bus. At various times, we were saying that the Ornge board of directors was driving the bus. At other times, we've heard that, really, the issue is not Ornge or Mazza; it's even the federal government. Never once did we hear that this government and the Ministry of Health were driving the bus. And we now know we have a piece of legislation denoting the fact that at some point in time maybe we do want the minister to have some say in what's happening in one of its agencies, boards and commissions, Mr. Speaker.

This is, I think, a little too similar to what we're dealing with in the justice committee today: with respect to: Who is actually driving the bus? Who's making these decisions? The fact that the government says, "That's somebody else," automatically avoids any accountability being thrust upon them. Well, that's not the intent of special-purpose bodies. That's not the intent of agencies, boards and commissions that are providing public services to the people of the province of Ontario.

We have to be very forthright with respect to trying to get some accountability from this government. It just

seems that these bodies are created to avoid blame. The fact is, when there's good news to be had, the ministry delivers it; when there's bad news to be had, it's these special-purpose bodies that get the blame. Mr. Speaker, I think that has to certainly be addressed at some point with respect to how this government operates.

I've heard the word "filibuster" a few times, Mr. Speaker, and I want to make special reference—I first spoke to Bill 50, which was in the first session of the 40th Parliament almost a year ago, on May 3, 2012, and then I had a little bit of a break because it was at the end of day, and I got to speak to it again and resumed finishing my—I think it was a 20-minute rotation. I had 18 minutes left. I did that a whole month later. The reason why it took that long was because the government simply didn't want to listen to the opposition. We asked for a special committee on Ornge; we never received it.

The reason why we're looking for these answers and asking these types of questions is that the first step in actually getting something positive in terms of public policy is defining a problem. We still have public accounts looking at the Ornge air ambulance service and its investigations. We have the OPP that is currently investigating potential criminality with respect to what happened at Ornge. We have lots of questions that we're asking. We don't have those answers yet. So, frankly, if we're talking about creating a bill to fix Ornge, perhaps we might want to wait for some of those questions to be answered. But no, no, we're knee-deep in scandal, so what do we do? "Let's trot out a bill that doesn't address the problems, because we don't know what those problems are, and make everyone think that we're actually doing something positive for the people of Ontario." Frankly, I find that pretty disgusting, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the Premier was in the Waterloo region on Friday and Saturday of last week. Certainly, she was at the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival in the good riding of Kitchener-Conestoga—my friend from Kitchener-Conestoga's riding. I'm pretty sure she was flipping some pancakes at the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival, but she would have woken up, Mr. Speaker, to a Waterloo Region Record story that morning that talked about 26 paramedics in Waterloo region being disciplined for failing to—well, essentially fudging the response times with respect to getting to the scene of the incident where they were requested. In essence, Mr. Speaker, when there are code 4 calls, that means lights and sirens; you're going as fast as you can to get to those calls. But in many instances—documented instances, on account of an investigation by the ministry—those responses weren't being met and the documents, frankly, were being doctored.

Imagine if you were on the other end of a code 4 call, where you want lights and sirens and where you want those paramedics to get to the scene as fast as you can, and they're not coming; they're not there, based on some systemic failure. The last thing we want to happen with paramedics in Waterloo region or the Ornge air ambulance service is for people who need those services most not to have those services on account of the mismanage-

ment and the operational dysfunction that we see in those organizations. That needs to change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments relating to the member's speech?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to my colleague from the Cambridge riding.

I've been thinking—because this has been a long afternoon; for some reason it's going really slowly—but I was trying to think of what former MPP Peter Kormos would be talking about. As many of you know, he was a maverick. He was a champion of the people. He cared so deeply about his responsibility in this House, because he always knew that he served at the pleasure and the privilege of the people from the riding, and he knew that the money that we are responsible for—the budget, from a fiscal responsibility perspective—was the people's money, and therefore our responsibility and our oversight of that money needed to be at the utmost, at the highest level.

He had a huge respect for the role of the Ombudsman in the province of Ontario, and André Marin in particular. He always made the point—because I used to watch this channel a lot—that oversight was needed, because it was the key to true accountability and it added an additional layer of trust that the public needed and which it has been proven we all need, in order for those agencies that are delivering public services to the public—that oversight is absolutely needed.

He might have also been concerned about the money that is spent on the huge increase in the ministers on the other side of the House, the money that's being spent in that regard. What's the value for money in general? What are the people getting for an increased state of government? I think, when you look at this bill, that we see that this is basically a little bit of surface, and when you scratch it you get a little bit more surface. He would have been standing in this House, I believe, asking for better, asking for more, from the people of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure to share a few thoughts on the honourable member's speech, particularly because I have some guests here in the gallery: Joan Euler, Raj Saini and Matteo Sestito, who are here visiting Queen's Park and who have ties to Waterloo region.

I listened with interest to the member's comments. He spoke a lot about ministerial responsibility, and other members of the Conservative caucus have spoken about it. In my two-minuters that I've done today, I've talked about the good work that the minister did in terms of recognizing her responsibility to address the problems at Ornge—the changes that had been made there, the work that was done by the Auditor General, the unfortunate role that the police have had to play because it was such a serious situation—but the minister took the helm and moved forward, with this bill being the final piece of the puzzle.

But the honourable member raises ministerial responsibility, and I thought I'd quote an expert on the whole issue. As this is questions and comments, I'd ask him to

perhaps respond. I quote, "The minister is under no obligation to resign for something a civil servant alone has done. This was never what ministerial responsibility meant, and is not how it should be understood ... the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, therefore, cannot always mean that a minister must resign for everything that goes wrong in his department."

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I further quote: "A minister cannot know and oversee everybody within a department."

I quote again: "The doctrine of ministerial responsibility contained two main assumptions; first, that a minister had to be able to explain what was going on in his or department. This does not mean that the minister is responsible for actions of his or her subordinates.... Ministerial responsibility, according to Bagehot, was never about taking the blame for somebody else's actions."

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member recognizes those words. They're from his very own PhD thesis.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's a privilege to stand up and—my colleague from Cambridge. Some of the points: You talk about the smokescreen and the urgency for this bill. He talks about first talking about it a year ago, and then, the next time the bill comes up to finish this discussion is a full month later. How many more times did that month get delayed till the famous October date when the House was prorogued? It's interesting.

I have to agree with the member from Kitchener-Waterloo and the recount of Peter Kormos being taken too young—somebody who put a lot of heart in this House.

To the House leader, when he says that ministers can't be responsible to know what goes on for everybody in their ministry, we can't help but to agree with that. But this was simply a case where, time and time—we have many cases where things were pointed out to the minister at the time, whether it be from members of the opposition—we've heard in Hansard it was placed—or members of the Ornge organization. The Auditor General finally was pointing out that he was having issues.

At what point should you not know that there's an issue? I think that's the real question. It came up over and over again. There were many opportunities to say that there was something wrong. You don't have to be an expert to certainly know that when that many people are saying there's an issue and they're being squashed, maybe we should look into it.

More than a full year after the story breaks in the paper, the reporters are all over it, we're all over it, and they still aren't taking accountability for it. I think that's the issue here. When you mess up, fess up. I think I've heard that a few times around here. That's what we're asking for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to speak to that issue of ministerial responsibility as well. This was going on for

around four years. There were employees who came forward, who were blowing the whistle, who lost their jobs, and the minister and the ministry responsible chose to ignore that over a period of a number of years.

The thesis from the member from Cambridge—

Mr. Rob Leone: It's a good thesis.

Ms. Cindy Forster: And I'll take an opportunity to read it.

We're not talking about 100 bucks here or 1,000 bucks; we're talking about millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars. We're talking about people's lives that were lost. We're talking about people waiting eight or nine hours for an air ambulance that never showed up. We're talking about huge risks here, not only to the public purse but to the people who actually foot the bill for taxes here in the province of Ontario.

To say, "Well the minister, you know, isn't responsible," and, "The minister doesn't need to resign over these kinds of issues"—ministers have resigned in this Legislative Assembly and in the federal Legislative Assembly for a lot less over the years. I don't know how you actually get back the respect of the public and the public trust unless somebody takes responsibility for this. If the minister isn't taking responsibility, what bureaucrats in the ministry actually took responsibility? We haven't heard that anybody lost their job over this in the ministry.

Mr. Robert Bailey: They got promoted.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, some of them probably got promotions. I think that there has to be some responsibility from a ministry point of view over this whole mess.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Cambridge has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rob Leone: Two minutes to recite my dissertation for the government House leader, I think.

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Leone: You think so?

I want to first say to the members from Welland and Kitchener-Waterloo: My deepest sympathies are with you today. I know we've paid some respects to the great Peter Kormos in this Legislature already. I wanted you to know that my thoughts and prayers are with you at this time.

I want to thank my seatmate, the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, for his comments. Also to the government House leader, who clearly has read my dissertation—although I'm not sure how far he's read the dissertation, how far along, or if he's read the whole thing, because there are certainly some answers that he could find if he actually got the totality of that dissertation.

In the minute and 10 that I have here to go through my whole dissertation, first of all, responsibility doesn't always mean a resignation. Sometimes, it just means an apology. We've received neither a resignation nor an apology with respect to what's happened at Ornge. That's the first comment I would make.

The second comment is that, sure, it's true that, obviously, if you don't know, you can't get the whole scope

of what's going on in your ministry, but that doesn't mean that you can plead ignorance of things that you ought to have known. If you ought to have known something and you don't know, and you're clearly turning a blind eye to that, again, we can ask you to resign for that.

Also, I think that in the course of talking about these things, not answering questions, misleading the House—these are also resignable offences or events that you could actually ask and seek responsibility from the minister for.

Mr. Speaker, this is the scope of what we're talking about, totally within the realm of what—I'm glad the

government House leader has read my dissertation to have learned those aspects as well.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I adjourn the House for the day, I would refer the members to standing order 146, which permits the Speaker to welcome special guests into the chamber. I am very pleased and proud to introduce my family: my wife, Lisa; our sons Dean, Phill and Jack; and Jack's friend Pier Zuk. Welcome to the Legislature.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)



Tuesday 9 April 2013

Mardi 9 avril 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 April 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 avril 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Ms. Wynne moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 /
Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les
aliments locaux.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Wynne has moved second reading of the act. Ms. Wynne?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

I'm very pleased to be able to rise today to speak to second reading of the Local Food Act. I think that local food is something we can all agree sustains people in communities, rural and urban, across the province.

I just want to ask us all to reflect a little bit on our experiences of local food. If I think about a time before it was conscious to me that I was eating local food or not, I can remember being really very excited in the summer when August would come, because that was the time when we could get corn. We could get Ontario-grown corn. We would go to pick up—or my dad would pick up on the way home from his office—local corn at Mr. Topper's farm in Richmond Hill. That was his name, and he was just north of Elgin Mills. We only ate corn in August. We didn't eat corn any other time of the year. I don't even know if it was available in stores, but certainly my father had a complete prejudice about Ontario corn: That was the best-tasting corn, and that's the only corn we should eat.

When my own kids came along, we would wait for the spring to go to the berry picking farms and pick strawberries. I can remember my middle child when she was about two and a half. I can see her in the berry patch with strawberries all over her face. I'm not sure how many went in the basket. Those experiences, I think, need to inform the way we think about the abundance of local Ontario food.

Just a final piece: There was a story on the CBC this morning—Metro Morning, in the Toronto area—about a

young man who is setting up a website, foodstory.ca. He wants to connect people who wouldn't normally go to farmers' markets to farmers' markets. So he's setting up a website to allow people in the urban centre of downtown Toronto to connect with farmers who are bringing their food into farmers' markets but aren't able to connect with some of the younger generation who don't have the habit of going to farmers' markets.

I think that's what the Local Food Act is about. It's about finding ways of raising people's consciousness about accessing that great Ontario food.

Je suis heureuse de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour la deuxième lecture du projet de loi sur les aliments locaux. Les aliments locaux assurent la subsistance des gens et des collectivités rurales et urbaines dans toute la province.

Wherever I go, I see that more and more people are joining the local food movement, and it's doing great things for Ontario: It's supporting our farmers, it's strengthening our communities and it's building our economy. From my perspective, that's what the agri-food sector is about. It's about making sure that we understand how important the agri-food industry is to Ontario. We want to give that movement some added momentum. We want to celebrate and support all of the good things that grow in Ontario. That's why last fall my colleague Minister McMeekin proposed a Local Food Act. We said that we were going to do that, and he proposed it. I want to thank him for his commitment to our agri-food sector and all the effort and good work that he put into that act.

Hon. Jeff Leal: A great minister.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's right, he's an excellent minister.

Last month, I was pleased to carry that commitment forward with the introduction of our new Local Food Act. If passed, the act would increase local food awareness, access and sales by enabling the government to set local food goals and targets, in consultation with stakeholders. That's an important aspect of this. We really believe that working with the sector—working with people who produce food, working with people who process food—we can find a way to set those targets in a realistic way.

One of the concerns I heard at the time that the Local Food Act was introduced in the first place—I was the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and I heard from municipalities that there was some concern that if we were too prescriptive as a provincial government, we would put in place an undue burden on local communities, on municipalities and on producers. We don't want

to do that. This has to be about a partnership; it has to be about working together.

What this would do is it would enable, as I say, the government to work with the public sector organizations towards those goals and to share information on their progress and results. Because we know that if we can shine a light on progress, then we can enhance that progress. It would also celebrate local food by proclaiming a local food week that would begin the Monday before Thanksgiving, and it would require the government to produce a local food report on the activities it has undertaken to support local food. I think that's a significant aspect of the legislation, Madam Speaker, because requiring that the minister actually gather that information and report it is another way of sharing information and making it clear that we're taking this seriously.

In order for it to work, the local food bill has to have a strategy that works beyond the sector. That's why we've been talking to stakeholders and families about how we can encourage the people of Ontario to ask for and buy local food. This is where I really believe the public is ahead of us on this. I think the public is already going into stores and is already wanting to know where the local food is, wanting to know, "Why can't I find Ontario lettuce? Why can't I find Ontario potatoes? How do I do that?" I think we can encourage that and we can support people in that.

Last summer, in fact, we hosted regional round tables across Ontario, in Ottawa, Ancaster, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Sudbury and London. L'été dernier, nous avons organisé des tables rondes régionales un peu partout en Ontario : à Ottawa, Ancaster, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Sudbury et London. We talked with a variety of stakeholders across multiple sectors during those meetings, from the farming and food processing sectors to the retail and the broader public sectors. We took the conversation right down into our communities, talking with families at farmers' markets and agricultural fair grounds too. We began these conversations by asking a number of questions: "How do we best increase demand for and access to local food across the province?" So we've got perceptions on how we could do that; and, "What role can government, industry and communities play?" Comment pouvons-nous le mieux accroître la demande et l'accès aux produits locaux à l'échelle de la province, et quel est le rôle que le gouvernement, l'industrie et les collectivités doivent jouer?

The feedback that we received was invaluable as we drafted the Local Food Act and created our broader local food strategy. So we didn't just introduce the bill and not continue to talk to people. We continued to have that conversation to improve the bill and the strategy outside of the legislation.

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With input from the agri-food sector, we made sure that the act allows the minister to set goals and targets that we can realistically work towards, because we want our farmers, food processors and public sector institutions to experience benefits, not burdens, from this act.

That was my point from earlier: We don't want this to be onerous, and we don't want this to be a prescription from Queen's Park on food processors, on farmers, on municipalities; we want this to be something that supports what local producers are already trying to do.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Grassroots

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Exactly.

Ensuring that success is about working together: It's about collaboration across the value chain; it's about coming up with ways that will increase the demand and supply of Ontario food from the farm gate to the dinner plate. As I said, the Local Food Act is just one part of that broader local food strategy.

Beyond the legislation, we're also proposing more education about the benefits of local food. If I go back to that first story I was telling about my family and eating corn and tomatoes in August—end of July and August—I want to make sure that young people understand the difference in flavour between a strawberry grown in Ontario and a strawberry that's imported from far away, and understand that if you can get corn—I have a bit of a passion about corn that's picked on the same day. We can't always get it picked on the same day, but if you can, it tastes totally different than corn that has been sitting around for a while. I know there are local markets in Peterborough where you can get corn picked on the same day.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Every Saturday.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There you go.

Hon. Reza Moridi: The best corn comes from Richmond Hill.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You see? Everywhere: The best corn comes from Richmond Hill, the best corn comes from Peterborough, from Brampton. Really, the best corn comes from Ontario.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I tried to grow my own last year, but the raccoons got to it.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Apparently some of my colleagues have tried to grow their own. Maybe they shouldn't give up their day jobs; they can leave that to the farmers in their community.

We're proposing more education about the benefits of local food, more support for communities and regions to work on local food initiatives, and a commitment to consult with stakeholders on the best ways to promote local food. Madam Speaker, I know that in Simcoe county there's a Simcoe food strategy now, and I know you're aware of that. That's the kind of local initiative that brings people together and helps everyone understand what they can do to advance the local food cause. Those kinds of strategies are the good ideas we want to share across the province.

But we'll lead by example too. We'll lead through an Ontario government policy requiring ministries to consider local food procurements under \$25,000. Again, we think that's very doable. When there's going to be a procurement, we want that to be a local food procurement. We'll continue to promote the good things that grow in Ontario through our Foodland Ontario food pro-

gram. I want to emphasize that this is not a notion that would take the place of the existing program, but would enhance it.

Another part of our local food strategy is a really exciting new industry-led risk management fund that supports Ontario corn-fed beef. I had the privilege of visiting the Conlin family farm a few weeks ago to announce this initiative, and I was lucky enough to see how a top-notch cattle feedlot operates. There were three generations of Conlins on the farm, thousands of cattle and a cheeky goat named Manny. It's operations like this that really provide the backbone of rural Ontario.

That's why we are investing \$10 million towards this new type of risk management fund, so that we can help stabilize pricing and stimulate growth for people like the Conlins so they can market more of their local food onto our plates and so that their farm operation can be sustainable and the next generation can take over that farm operation. That is something that is a real concern to farmers in the province—that they're able to have an operation that their children can take over.

C'est pourquoi nous investissons 10 millions de dollars dans ce nouveau type de fonds de gestion des risques : nous voulons stabiliser les prix et stimuler la croissance pour des gens comme les Conlin afin qu'ils puissent mettre encore plus d'aliments locaux dans nos assiettes.

The fund will be run by farmers, for farmers, and will help them manage their own risks and take control of their businesses. It's really a new way of looking at business risk management, and I want to commend the vision shown by Ontario Corn Fed Beef in pursuing this initiative and working with my predecessor to put this in place. They did the hard work, they came together and they came up with this idea.

It's a great opportunity, I think, to grow and strengthen the entire beef industry, which supports more than 11,000 jobs and contributes approximately \$4 billion to the provincial economy.

Initiatives like these are so important to our government because we know that when we can help people buy locally grown food, we're supporting our farmers; we're boosting food production and processing, which help job growth and economic growth; and we're strengthening our environment.

One of the things that I've been saying in my role as Minister of Agriculture and Food as I travel the province and I meet with food processing and producer organizations is that I'm not sure that the general public understands the impact of the agri-food sector on Ontario's economy. I'm not sure that people understand generally that the agri-food sector is the second-largest manufacturing sector in the province—a \$34-billion contribution to the GDP, more than 700,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's number one.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm hearing from my Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment that it's number one. It goes back and forth between

number one and number two, but today it's number one; today it's the largest manufacturing sector.

I think that's a badly understood reality about Ontario's economy, Madam Speaker, and part of this discussion around the Local Food Act is making that better understood, helping people to understand that as we grow Ontario's economy, as we put the conditions in place to create jobs, part of that is putting the conditions in place for the agri-food sector to grow and flourish. By doing this, we are strengthening the economy and we're strengthening the environment.

Our proposed legislation highlights the strong contribution that Ontario's agri-food sector makes to our province, to our way of life and, as I've said, to our economy.

Ontario's farmers grow and raise more than 200 commodities. We're home to about 3,000 food and beverage manufacturing establishments—more than any other province—and our agri-food sector, as I said, accounts for \$34 billion of the provincial GDP and supports 700,000 jobs.

I chose to take on the role of Minister of Agriculture and Food because I wanted to raise the profile of this important industry. I'm very fortunate to be in a position to shine a light on the wonderful work that this industry does, the contributions that they make to a strong Ontario, and the foundations for their success.

I'm also aware that every member of this Legislature has people who are working in farming, working in food processing; working in the agri-food sector in one way or another. I really do see this as one of these issues about which there really isn't a partisan disagreement. I know that the members of the opposition will speak today about the specifics of the legislation, but I also know that at the fundamental root of their concerns are exactly the same concerns that we share: that we support the agri-food sector in Ontario.

Ontario is home to a lucrative marketplace, with more than 80% of primary grocery shoppers intending to buy fresh, local Ontario food. That's the piece that I was saying that people are ahead of us on. They want to buy Ontario food. There's more retail interest than ever, with many restaurants and grocery stores highlighting local food on menus and in the aisles.

Le marché du détail est plus intéressé que jamais aux produits locaux, et de nombreux restaurants et épiceries mettent en vedette les aliments locaux sur leurs menus et sur les tablettes.

There's an additional element to success that trumps most others: Ontario's innovative farmers, who are willing to grow the food that people want, from bok choy to purple carrots. For example, look at From Farm to Table Canada, a leading-edge Cambridge food processor that provides consumers with farm-fresh products right from Ontario farms. As a strong proponent of buying local and healthy eating, Becky Smollett, the company's founder, worked with local Ontario corn growers to produce a popcorn snack that meets the nutrition standards under the Ontario School Food and Beverage Policy. Having received approval to use the Foodland Ontario logo on

their packaging in 2010, the company initially sold their product through schools and cafeterias. But as the demand increased, they expanded into the retail market. So they went beyond that initial narrow market.

Then there's Willowgrove Hill Farms from Mitchell, Ontario. Owners Paul and Rosie Hill are innovative pork producers who offer consumers Ontario pork products enhanced with omega 3 fatty acids. These nutrients are essential for the maintenance of general human health, normal growth and development. The pork is also enhanced with organic selenium, an antioxidant.

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Seeing the success of omega-3 in eggs and milk products and recognizing the health benefits, Paul and Rosie began the process of introducing omega-3 fatty acids into their feed back in 2007. In 2008, they started using the Foodland Ontario logo to identify to consumers their locally grown pork products. And in 2011, the Hill family farm was recognized as the Premier's Award recipients for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence. They took a great idea and they grew it. I'm happy to say that Willowgrove Hill has seen demand for their enriched pork product jump in the last couple of years. Starting out in smaller markets, they've recently launched their products in Ontario FreshCo stores across the province.

Longo Brothers Fruit Markets is another local food champion. They won a newly introduced Vision Award at the 2012 Foodland retailer awards ceremony a few weeks ago. The award was introduced to recognize outstanding corporate support for promoting Ontario foods under the Foodland Ontario brand.

Longo's is definitely a huge supporter of local food. They source a great variety of Ontario meats and have chosen to promote their selection at store level through co-branding with Foodland Ontario. When a customer ventures into the meat department at Longo's, there's no doubt that Ontario products dominate.

These are the kinds of initiatives that we want to promote, that we want to support, and I know that retailers and consumers want this to happen.

I also want to acknowledge Loblaw, Canada's largest food retailer and the host of our announcement for the introduction of this legislation. They're another very strong supporter of Ontario foods through initiatives like their Grown Close to Home program, which sources products from Ontario farmers. They also participate in Foodland Ontario's retail services program to boost awareness of Ontario products on their shelves. More than 200 of their stores also prominently feature Ontario corn-fed beef, and they're committed to sourcing even more local products.

Nous voulons mettre encore plus de bons produits de chez nous sur votre table, que cette table soit dans votre demeure, les écoles, les garderies, les hôpitaux ou les édifices gouvernementaux. C'est pourquoi nous avons fait des investissements afin d'accroître la quantité d'aliments locaux frais, sains et délicieux offerts par les organismes du secteur public élargi.

We want to bring more of the good things that grow in Ontario to your table, whether that table is in our kitch-

ens, at home, in our schools, daycares, hospitals or government buildings. That's why we've made investments to help increase the amount of fresh, healthy and delicious local foods in our broader public sector organizations.

We've done this in a variety of ways. We've done it by supporting programming through the Greenbelt Fund to connect buyers, including our public institutions, with local food producers. In fact, the Greenbelt Fund's ontariofresh.ca website serves as an electronic marketplace for more than 1,200 buyers and sellers of Ontario foods.

Sysco Ontario is a great example of how our support for the Greenbelt Fund is getting more local food into our institutions. The reality is that it's not always going to be possible for someone to find a farmers' market, or find that local farmer, without some of the modern technologies. We acknowledge that, and so we're using those. With support through the fund, Sysco has worked with producers and operators to feature and promote Ontario cheeses on their menus and successfully increased Ontario cheese sales by just over \$5 million. Their sales staff now look to fill customer orders with Ontario cheese first.

So it's a change in culture, a change in focus. Institutions that previously overlooked local cheese have now made the shift. I know that the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is going to be talking about local cheese in his remarks.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: St-Albert.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: St-Albert, oui.

They now have the marketing tools to continue to promote local cheese to their consumer base. Sysco is also using the Foodland Ontario logo to help promote Ontario foods to their clients. According to the company, they're proud to work with the farming community to help them provide Ontario restaurants with safe and sustainable produce.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Headquartered in Peterborough.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There you go: in Peterborough.

My point, Madam Speaker, is that industry and retailers want this to happen. They want to work with government, and they want to work with producers.

Our total investment toward this broader sector programming has resulted in \$26 million in additional Ontario food in daycares, schools, universities and colleges, or a 5-to-1 return on investment for every public dollar spent. It's a good investment.

We remain committed to bringing more local food into Ontario's municipalities, long-term-care homes, hospitals and schools. That's why we're providing an additional \$5 million to the Greenbelt Fund to continue their good work in making it easier for public institutions to buy local.

As I travel around the province, meeting with different groups in the agri-food industry, I always emphasize how interconnected we are as rural and urban Ontario. I think the debate that sometimes creeps into this discussion is

whether rural Ontario has the interests of urban Ontario and urban Ontario has the interests of rural Ontario at heart. I believe that we are interconnected, that we have to think of ourselves as one Ontario and that we need to find ways to make that connection real. One of those ways is through the local food initiative. Farmers feed us all; we know that. We all have a stake in their success. To pretend that somehow we're separate is not helpful.

En voyageant dans la province et en rencontrant différents groupes de l'industrie agroalimentaire, je remarque souvent à quel point l'Ontario rural et l'Ontario urbain sont reliés.

From ethnically diverse foods to foods that address special dietary needs like nut-free and gluten-free, the province's agri-food industry is responding to consumer demand right across the spectrum. But we recognize there's always more that we can do, and today's consumers are more engaged in learning about food. They're reading labels. They're asking about where their food comes from. They want to know what they're feeding their children, how it was grown or produced. They also care who is behind the production of their food. They want to support their local farmers. What we're going to do with this act is to help them to do that—and with our broader local food strategy. We want to help the agri-food industry continue to meet consumer demands.

I'd like to just close by reminding everyone that when we choose foods that are grown and made here at home, it's good for our families, it's good for our communities, and it's good for Ontario farmers. It strengthens us as an entity, as a province. This proposed legislation will help people find, buy and eat food and beverages that are grown, harvested and made in Ontario wherever they are. I encourage Ontario consumers to choose Ontario foods first whenever they can, and I salute the hard-working farmers and food processors and all of the businesses connected to our agri-food industry for the great work that they continue to do each and every day.

J'encourage les consommateurs ontariens à choisir des aliments de l'Ontario en premier chaque fois que c'est possible. Je rends hommage à tous les agriculteurs et transformateurs alimentaires qui travaillent si fort, ainsi que toutes les entreprises associées à notre industrie agroalimentaire, pour tous leurs efforts quotidiens.

Because when we work together, we can find ways to grow this great industry.

I'll just close by saying I had the opportunity to be at the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival this past weekend. It's going to be a great maple syrup season, I believe, because the cold nights and the sunnier days—although today may not be a good example—the cooler nights and warmer days are going to produce a great harvest. So if you can, get to a maple sugar bush and buy Ontario maple syrup. It's another one of those great seasonal food products that make Ontario agriculture the best in the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise in the House and follow the Premier and Minister of

Agriculture on what I consider to be a very important component of what we do as a government to support our local businesses. I'm pleased to rise and also to support the good things that grow right here in Ontario.

If passed, this bill would be part of a larger food strategy. As the Premier has said, the public is already ahead of us on this one.

Je suis heureux de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour démontrer mon appui des bons produits cultivés en Ontario. Si le projet de loi est adopté, il deviendra un des éléments d'une stratégie globale sur les aliments locaux, et comme l'a mentionné la première ministre, le grand public a déjà de l'avance dans ce domaine.

I'll be talking about what this bill will do, and then I'll take the opportunity to talk about some of the wonderful local food initiatives that are already on the go on the ground in my riding and in surrounding areas. I'll also talk about how the agri-food industry has an innovative and creative approach to growth.

As the Minister of Agriculture has said, the agri-food industry contributed \$34 billion to the Ontario economy. That's significant. Ontario's local food isn't just produce bought at farmers markets; it's also food processed right here in Ontario as well. The agri-food industry supports more than 700,000 jobs across the province, and we have a food processing sector that, with almost 3,000 manufacturing businesses, contributes almost \$10 billion to our GDP and employs more than 94,000 people.

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L'industrie agroalimentaire a contribué 34 milliards de dollars à notre économie. Les aliments locaux de l'Ontario ne comprennent pas seulement les fruits et légumes achetés dans les marchés de producteurs. Il s'agit aussi des aliments qui sont transformés dans notre province. L'industrie agroalimentaire appuie plus de 700 000 emplois dans la province. En Ontario, nous avons un secteur de la transformation des aliments qui, avec près de 3 000 entreprises de fabrication, contribue presque 10 milliards de dollars à notre produit intérieur brut et fournit de l'emploi à plus de 94 000 personnes.

This bill is designed to work with local communities, not to add to cumbersome regulation and red tape. We know that every community and region in Ontario is unique, and this bill will capitalize on and promote the wonderful initiatives that are already in place.

The local food bill will allow for the establishment of goals and targets for local food through consultation. We listened when stakeholders told us that they didn't want targets imposed on them.

As a government, we will work with public sector organizations towards these goals and share the information on successes and best practices. We'll also celebrate local food with a local food week. We'll have the minister prepare a local food report on government activities that support local food, every three years.

As has been said, this bill is just one part of our comprehensive strategy. Beyond this legislation, we will lead by example, through an Ontario public-service-wide policy requiring ministries to consider local food for

procurements under \$25,000. We'll do what we can to educate about the benefits of local food. We'll support communities and regions working on local food. We're going to consult with stakeholders on a provincial designation system. We're going to continue to promote the things that grow in Ontario through our Foodland Ontario program.

I can tell you, last month I was very honoured to represent the Minister of Agriculture at the 2012 Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards in downtown Toronto. It was a great experience for me to basically reconnect with an industry that I'm quite familiar with. In my past, I served seven years as a regional manager of sales and operations for a company called Boulangerie Lanthier—Lanthier Bakery—based out of Alexandria, with production also out of Baie-d'Urfé in Quebec. Lanthier Bakery produces breads, hot dog and hamburger buns, and probably the best raisin bread made in Ontario. On many occasions, I'd be in the stores, working with purchasing agents to try to maximize our shelf space, creating planograms, trying to get as many SKUs into the stores as we possibly could.

One of our greatest accomplishments has been being the major distributor and supplier for Dollarama. Just last month, I was up at the Dollarama on Bloor Street. I look in and there's Lanthier Bakery bread, right here in Toronto.

We're expanding across the province—Betty Bread. It was certainly a privilege and an honour for me to work for such a great company, a family-owned business that has depots in Montreal, Ottawa, Alexandria, Brockville and Oshawa. I just wanted to make sure that—as we move forward with this type of initiative, that I'm quite familiar with what needs to be done in order to assist our retailers, our producers and our processors across the province.

As part of the local food bill, we're also going to help to fund local food projects across this province. The more appreciation and demand we have for local food and locally produced food, the more we can strengthen Ontario's agriculture and food industry.

Without local food, we wouldn't have as many food processing success stories to tell. These companies help contribute to Ontario's economy.

I'll give you a few examples. Ottawa's HoneyBar is the largest processor of honey east of Toronto. You could say that their HoneyBar trail mix is literally out of this world. That's because Canada's space agency has included it in the snacks enjoyed by astronaut Chris Hadfield and two other astronauts on board.

Hon. Jeff Leal: That's good news.

Mr. Grant Crack: It certainly is.

Voortman Cookies, headquartered in Burlington, has been baking and exporting premium baked goods since 1951. They have produced over 60 unique varieties of cookies, including an extensive line of sugar-free and low-sugar products. Voortman employs about 400 production workers and distributes their cookies throughout North America and overseas.

Chapman's Ice Cream—I'm sure everyone has heard of Chapman's Ice Cream. After a fire destroyed their facilities, Chapman's committed to rebuilding stronger than ever in their rural community. Their Project Phoenix included a huge \$100-million investment for building a state-of-the-art production facility with a test kitchen, research facilities, new product development and a separate, nut-free line for its ice cream production facilities. Today, Chapman's has successfully risen from the ashes and is now Canada's largest independent ice cream manufacturer. It's still Markdale's largest employer, employing almost 600 dedicated people.

Dr. Oetker chose London for its first North American frozen pizza factory. Its 200,000-square-foot facility will produce 50 million frozen pizzas a year for the North American market, providing up to 300 new jobs in the London region. The company will also buy about 11,000 metric tonnes of Ontario food ingredients worth \$20 million in the first year.

We know that food production and processing create jobs and economic growth, Madam Speaker. It is also a field where being creative and innovative is necessary to compete in the global market, and something that government works towards supporting.

Research and innovation is an important catalyst for agriculture and food, and something I want to take time to highlight. From current research into milk with cancer-fighting mineral supplements to healthier starches for everyday diets, agri-food scientists are coming up with new ways to provide healthier food for the people of Ontario.

La recherche et l'innovation sont des agents catalyseurs importants de l'agriculture et de l'agroalimentaire. C'est un point que je veux faire ressortir. Qu'il s'agisse des recherches actuelles sur le lait enrichi de suppléments minéraux pour lutter contre le cancer ou d'amidons plus sains pour l'alimentation quotidienne, les scientifiques agroalimentaires proposent de nouvelles façons d'offrir des aliments plus sains aux gens de l'Ontario.

This is an amazing area where the opportunities for the agri-food industry to get involved are endless. Currently, researchers are trying to improve the nutrition uptake for residents of health care and long-term-care facilities through inclusion of local food into residence diets. Science is helping the agri-food sector advance in other ways, like the intelligent vegetable-harvesting robots that researchers at the university have developed. This could emerge as a revolutionary technology for the Canadian greenhouse industry, giving growers a competitive edge. On all fronts, people are working together to enhance and strengthen Ontario's agricultural and food industry and move forward into the next century. Working together is key.

La science aide le secteur agroalimentaire à aller de l'avant d'autres façons, comme avec les robots récolteurs intelligents de légumes qui ont été développés par des chercheurs universitaires. Ceci pourrait se révéler une technologie révolutionnaire pour l'industrie canadienne des serres et donner aux producteurs un avantage

concurrentiel. Sur tous les fronts, les gens collaborent pour améliorer et renforcer l'industrie agroalimentaire ontarienne et nous propulser dans le prochain siècle. La collaboration est essentielle.

We need to remember and value what is at the heart of it all: our land and the people who grow our food. Because without them, we don't have any other great innovations, science developments and businesses that grow from it. There are so many more new ideas, new technologies and approaches that are helping to move our agricultural and food sectors forward.

Each year, we take the time to proudly recognize these achievements in research and innovation through the Premier's Award for Agri-food Innovation. Last year alone, we congratulated 50 award recipients at events held throughout the province.

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The top-ranked Premier's Award went to Philip Short, a tender-fruit grower from Niagara region. He wanted to add value to the products currently sold in the marketplace and he wanted to develop innovative packaging solutions to meet the needs of retailers, consumers and growers. So Phillip landed on a simple idea: build a better basket that keeps fruit fresher longer, with less damage from transport.

This basket helps the standards of product quality; it transports product easily; it's more attractive to consumers, who can see what they're buying; and it's good for food safety. Because the fruit is sealed—it has a lid—no hands touch it as it moves from the packaging shed to the consumer's home. It even stores well in the fridge since the lid keeps the food fresh.

It's easy to see why today this innovator supplies most of Niagara's tender-fruit growers. In fact, almost half of the peaches grown in Ontario in 2010 and beyond were packed in these containers. They were all used by Loblaw's vendors nationally, including in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Right across Canada.

Mr. Grant Crack: Right across Canada. The fruit of one man's idea and labour has enjoyed tremendous success.

The Minister's Award went to Burning Kiln Winery. This group's story began in 2006 when they planted high-quality French vinifera varieties on 23 acres of land that were previously tobacco.

The winery has converted displaced tobacco kilns into high-tech award-winning wine-making machines. The result is great-tasting Ontario wine that shows innovation thriving in Norfolk.

I can tell you that everywhere I go, I encourage my family and friends to buy Ontario wines. I can't understand why anyone would go into the local LCBO and buy a wine that's not an Ontario. I think everybody has to—

Interjection.

Mr. Grant Crack: Buy Ontario wine. The Premier and the Minister of Agriculture is just indicating that she

was at Burning Kiln Winery and says it's one of the greatest wines.

We also recognize three Leaders in Innovation Award recipients:

—Mariposa Dairy in Kawartha Lakes county worked with community partners to come up with a mega-press machine that separate curds and whey so quickly and efficiently that it has reduced the separation time cycle from four days to just 24 hours;

—Nicholyn Farms in Simcoe county, which offers daily nutritious local food lunches to their community. The Van Casteren family prepares 600 lunches weekly, and they have expanded their own vegetable crop by five acres in addition to drawing the production of fellow farmers in the area;

—Victory Organic in the Niagara region came up with the “bob wash,” an affordable small-scale system for ensuring that salad greens and root vegetables are washed and packaged safely right on the farm.

There are a dozen more innovation stories that are recognized with regional awards each year. Many of them demonstrate the passion that our farmers, our food processors and our communities have for local food. We look forward to recognizing more innovations later this year under this awards program.

I truly believe that the people of Ontario want to eat local food not only because of the quality and freshness, but because they want to support this innovative sector. Supporting local food and local producers is something we feel passionate about and something that many regions are already working towards.

Premier Wynne speaks about how rural and urban Ontario are interconnected. Local food is a great example of how this province works. I am so proud to come from eastern Ontario, from the great riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. On November 22, I was able to attend the second annual Bilingual Eastern Ontario Local Food Conference that was held in Kemptville, where we shared a lot of great ideas and collaborated on how we can move forward with regard to our local food bill. The input that was received and the ideas that are being presented out there are just great and encouraging and help us as a government to know, as we move forward with the local food bill, that we're on the right track.

The theme chosen for the conference was “Collaborating for Success.” There were over 175 producers and processors who attended the conference, with an additional number participating via Agriwebinar. The conference works towards facilitating stronger relationships among eastern Ontario stakeholders to provide technical information in key areas where development is needed to encourage economic growth; and further expanding local foods in eastern Ontario. A wide variety of local food topics were covered, including value-chain development, regulatory requirements, consumer-driven co-operative models, and many more.

To name a few, Savour Ottawa is an initiative spearheaded by Ottawa Tourism, Just Food and the city of Ottawa. This group boasts over 125 members, including

approximately 80 farmers and 30 food service providers, retailers, microprocessors and supporters. Savour Ottawa works to develop and promote Ottawa and the area as a premier year-round culinary destination, with robust offerings of local foods and experiences for both locals and visitors to the area.

In my own riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, we have an amazing little town or village called St-Albert. Fromagerie St-Albert enjoys worldwide renown for exceptional quality cheeses which have been made for more than a century. Five generations of farmers and craftsmen have worked to maintain St-Albert's long tradition of quality. St-Albert's is owned by 50 producers. St-Albert Cheese manufacturing employs more than 100 people, who are guided by a common concern for quality and freshness to ensure success.

The wider community stands behind and supports the Fromagerie St-Albert. We almost lost this gem in a fire, but the community pulled together, and everyone in this Legislature can agree that the cheese curds that St-Albert's produces—and my predecessor, Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde, former MPP, in a tradition followed by myself in bringing St-Albert's cheese to Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Day—goes unnoticed by all the MPPs, as I've been told that St-Albert's cheese is the best cheese in the province of Ontario.

Each year, we have le Festival de la Curd in St-Albert, and I attend this each year with my family. This year, I would like to invite all MPPs to come to Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for this festival—it's a special year—because we need to show our support for Fromagerie St-Albert, after a terrible fire this year that destroyed much of the plant. I'd particularly like to invite the member from Leeds–Grenville. He's not far, and he can come down and see me there. This year we're celebrating our 20th anniversary, and it will be bigger than ever, so come to Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and enjoy some of the best cheese in the world.

Each year, I also attend le Festival de la Bine de Plantagenet. This is a family festival by la Binerie de Plantagenet that is celebrated in the fall and recognizes a local dietary staple: the bean. Folks from across my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell bring samples of their family bean recipes, and there's even a contest voted upon by the tasters. Last year, there were over 1,250 participants—very, very exciting.

People in my riding love to support our local food producers and processors, and this legislation that we've just tabled for second reading hopes to illustrate that without local food, we wouldn't have as many food-processing success stories to tell. And these companies help contribute to Ontario's economy.

I would be remiss not to talk about the craft brewers' reception last night, where I was able to enjoy one of my favourite craft beers, made by Beau's Brewery. Tim and Steve Beauchesne from Vankleek Hill have created one of the greatest-tasting specialty beers in Ontario. It's great to see them getting their listings and being stocked in the local LCBOs. I would encourage anyone to go and

try out this fantastic beer. I know that, from across the province of Ontario, there were other craft brewers there that are very good, high quality as well, but it's important for me to make sure that I put my plug in for my residents right out of Vankleek Hill.

Interjection.

Mr. Grant Crack: It certainly is.

There are many other initiatives—la Foire Gourmande out of Lefavre. This is quite an initiative that was started a couple of years back, where there's a partnership between Quebec and Ontario. We have residents taking the ferry from Quebec, coming over to the Ontario side in Lefavre and enjoying the local foods, beers and wines that are created in our region. In return, people take the ferry over to Quebec and they also do the same thing.

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This is a success story that has been going on for a number of years. I have attended that on two occasions in the last two years, and I look forward to being able to attend that.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: And the winery—are you going to talk about the winery in Prescott–Russell?

Mr. Grant Crack: Madame Meilleur, the Honourable Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, is a great fan of Domaine Perrault. Domaine Perrault is a winery just outside of Navan, again in my great riding. I encourage anyone who comes into our area to look them up. They're always willing hosts, willing to invite you to show how they make their wine—a very good price. I would imagine—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I raise my glass to them.

Mr. Grant Crack: The minister is raising her glass to Domaine Perrault as well. It's owned by Denis Perrault and his wife, out of Navan.

In closing, I've given a number of occasions of how proud I am of those who produce products in Ontario in my riding. Je suis très fier de tous les producteurs et processeurs dans ma région de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. It reflects the feedback that we've heard through five separate consultations on what they're doing out there. We need to build on their success stories that I've just described earlier.

Pour terminer, ce projet de loi reflète les commentaires recueillis lors de cinq différentes consultations et vise à multiplier les succès déjà obtenus dans ce domaine. Notre projet de loi sur les aliments locaux et la stratégie globale connexe aideront encore plus de gens à trouver, acheter et manger des aliments et boissons cultivés, récoltés et transformés en Ontario, quel que soit leur lieu de résidence. Our local food bill and broader strategy will help more people find, buy and eat Ontario-grown, -harvested and -made food and beverages right here in Ontario, wherever they live.

J'encourage les membres de ma circonscription et tous les résidents de la province à choisir d'abord les aliments de l'Ontario lorsque cela est possible. I encourage people in my riding and from across this great province to choose Ontario first whenever they can.

Continuons à appuyer ensemble les aliments locaux. Lorsque nous collaborons, nous renforçons l'Ontario.

Let's continue to support local food together, because when we work together we make Ontario stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to address the Minister of Agriculture and the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Thanks for the shout-out to Chapman's Ice Cream in the great town of Markdale from the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, the heart of agriculture.

Of course we support anything from an agricultural perspective that's going to ensure that our agricultural industry is going to be viable down the road. Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound was built from an agricultural perspective. That's how our whole community evolved, and it's still a key, key industry in the heart of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

We definitely agree with the Premier/ag minister's comments that we need to be mutually inclusive for both rural and urban. She made some comments about corned beef, the Risk Management Program, the \$25,000 preference, but you know what? There's nothing in the bill that actually addresses the three of these. It's again just a whole lot of lip service. It sounds good in a media interview, it's a sound bite that sounds really good, and we're supportive, but where's the detail? We need to understand that.

Speaker, I really have to ask the Premier—to ask the ag minister—if she's so supportive of all of this stuff, how could she have allowed her Minister of the Environment to put these absolutely exorbitant and punitive fees on tractor tires and all of the off-road machinery? How can she stand on one side and say, "I'm very supportive and it's wonderful," yet she puts these fees in that will drive jobs and tax revenue out of our great province? It's ludicrous.

In the House last week when I asked her this question, she said that she was going to address it, but those fees are in place right now. What's she truly doing before those jobs and those economic impacts are gone out of this province again? We just can't continue to go down this road.

We need to have an agriculture minister who's standing up and saying, "No, we can't do these things because it is punitive. It is going to drive jobs and tax revenues out of our great rural areas." We want you to step up and take action.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and talk about the importance of local food on the general economy at large and on the rural economy. In my riding in particular, Kitchener–Waterloo, we are surrounded by some of the richest, most prosperous soil and farming conditions in the province of Ontario, and yet there are some real barriers that farmers are facing in their field—not literally, and figuratively as well. I think that's one aspect of this act that I think that if we get it to committee, we can actually build some mechanisms and some tools in to truly support farmers.

There is also a missed opportunity here in the act to truly connect the education system with moving forward with local food. We have a lot of partnerships that are microscopic in the grand scheme of things, between schools and school boards and the farming industry, and I think that we can do a lot to connect those two elements in society so that we build future people in this province who are looking to the local food in their communities as a real option—actually, as the only option.

I know that genetically modified foods are a real issue in the province of Ontario, and I think that this is something that can be strengthened in support of our local and rural economy.

Certainly, I'm looking forward to Herrle's, which is the local farm in my riding, to open up. It's actually the big signal for spring, that spring is here. We make an extra effort to go there to support that family and that farm because farmers feed cities.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to speak on this Local Food Act that was introduced by the Minister of Agriculture.

In my riding, I don't have any farmers who are established because I represent downtown Ottawa, but I have a wonderful farmers' market. Of course, it's a place where people in Ottawa gather every day of the week, but especially on Saturday and Sunday, because we want to buy fresh food and we want to know where these fruits and vegetables and meats come from. So I wanted to pay tribute to the farmers in my area, who work very hard to provide us with this very tasty and good food, and we know where it's from.

But I want to take the opportunity to talk about St-Albert cheese factory, because on February 3, they had the misfortune of a big fire which razed their factory. I want to pay tribute to them because, instead of saying, "Poor us. What's happening? Are we going to get money from the government to rebuild?", the next day, Regent Ouimet got up in front of the microphone at a press conference and said, "We are going to rebuild. We're going to rebuild because this factory hired more than 100 people." They are so well known, not just in the area but on the Quebec side and on the Ontario side, for the best curds. I take the opportunity to invite all of you at the Festival de la Curd next August to help them, to give them a boost, because they are rebuilding. In no time, they have found a partner to help them to produce in the meantime.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comment?

Mr. Steve Clark: Good morning. I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes' worth of comments and questions on the Local Food Act.

The feedback that I've received so far is that—obviously, we're all champions of local food in our area. I have a number of farms in Leeds and Grenville, and I think we've got a great network. When the Premier

speaks about the local food movement, I'm very pleased that I have such an active movement in Leeds–Grenville.
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One thing that they have expressed concern about—and I will read from the definitions of the bill. It says:

“‘Local food’ means,

“(a) food produced or harvested in Ontario, and

“(b) subject to any limitations in the regulations, food and beverages made in Ontario if they include ingredients produced or harvested in Ontario.”

The concern that some of my local food movement members have expressed to me is that they want to allow for regional promotion and not just be a provincial designation. I think that was one of the concerns, that when we talk local food in eastern Ontario—and I know we have some of my colleagues from eastern Ontario that spoke earlier—we talk about it from a regional level. I know that in my riding, my local health unit has been very active in working on a local food charter.

I was just at our OFA meeting in Leeds county and we had a wonderful presentation by one of the champions of local food in Leeds–Grenville, Wendy Banks. I just want to do a quick shout-out to Wendy Banks and Rick Trudeau of Wendy's Mobile Market and Wendy's Country Market in Lyndhurst. They have developed not just a door-to-door delivery service but also a partnership with some 70 regional food producers and regional farmers. Wendy is a sixth-generation farmer, and they do a great job.

I look forward to the debate. I look forward to getting some more meat on the bones when it comes to this legislation, because it is bit of a photo op bill; it doesn't have much substance. But I look forward to the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the honourable member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who spoke briefly about the Local Food Act but then, of course, had to bring in another subject, which was the Ontario Tire Stewardship. I'm very pleased that you support the Local Food Act and that your party will be supporting the Local Food Act.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo: You made a great comment and I thank you for your input. Yes, farmers feed cities, but we also have to acknowledge the fact that, as the Premier had indicated, farmers need cities and cities need farmers. That's why this bill has been introduced, to try to bridge some of the gaps and encourage collaboration between the two important aspects of our economy.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: Merci beaucoup. She talked about St. Albert's cheese, Fromagerie St-Albert, dans ma circonscription. It's a very important employer, and we hope to see them being rebuilt and back to full production within the next year.

Thank you for your comments as well, the member from Leeds–Grenville. I know he's supportive, Madam Speaker, of this particular bill.

I'd just like to summarize and say I know there has been concern about the Local Food Act and some of the contents and the direction that we're taking, but rest assured that we have, as a government, listened.

In section 4, under the scope of the proposed bill, one of the concerns that was raised was that there's not any indication that local initiatives could be entertained, but under that section 4, under “Scope,” geographical areas are taken into consideration. That means that local communities can come up with local initiatives and local solutions for their local food.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to make a point of order. I'd like to introduce my guest today. She's here visiting from Perth–Wellington. Her name is Romaine Smith Fullerton. I'd like to wish her a warm welcome here in the House today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order, but we welcome her to the House.

The member for Oxford has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further business, government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1005 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce, from my riding of Perth–Wellington, Ben Dobben, who is the father of page Jarrod Dobben. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to introduce page Addison's father, August Arone, and his sister Chiara Arone, to the chamber today to see their brother and son be page captain today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm very pleased this morning to be able to introduce, in the east gallery here—sitting here with us today is Christie Hartley. Christie is the mother of page Kamryn Hartley, from my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I'd like to welcome her to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Joining us shortly will be members of the Equal Pay Coalition; also, an invitation for all MPPs to join them right after question period in rooms 228 and 230.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Ajax page Rabail Waseem's mother, Rubeen

Chauhen; her father, Waseem Sheikh; and younger brothers Hasnaat Waseem and Aayan Waseem. They're sitting in the gallery to my right. I'm sure that our page is honoured to have her mother and father here.

Hon. Michael Chan: The individual may not be here yet, but I still want to welcome him. His name is Zhe-hang Deng, a fourth-year political science student visiting from China.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? I shall offer one of my own. In the Speaker's gallery today is my other brother, the oldest brother, my brother Pat, and his wife, Ida. Welcome to Queen's Park. Being the patriarch of the family, he's going to give me a report card today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would now like all of us to observe as the pages assemble to be introduced. Our new pages are here today. Here they come. Right here.

I would ask all the members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the second session of the 40th Parliament: Jason Ahrens from York-Simcoe; Callum Arnold from Algoma-Manitoulin; Addison Arone from Barrie; Amina Bangura from Scarborough Centre; Sophia Carney from Ottawa-Vanier; Jarrod Dobben from Perth-Wellington; wait for it—Rosalin Dubois from Brant; Madelyn Elliott from Kitchener-Waterloo; Stacey Fernandes from Pickering-Scarborough East; Jack Greenberg from Halton; Kamryn Hartley from Thunder Bay-Atikokan; Annie Lloyd from Simcoe North; Morgan Palmer from Elgin-Middlesex-London; Nicholas Raponi De Roia from Ottawa South; Louis Riel-Brockie from Mississauga South; Glory Samouel from Oak Ridges-Markham; Madeline Smart-Reed from Etobicoke Centre; Theodore Vaidhyan from Mississauga-Erindale; Rabail Waseem from Ajax-Pickering; and Bonnie Wu from Richmond Hill. These are our pages. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday we learned that the cost of your gas plant cancellation is now showing up on the hydro bills of hard-working Ontarians. Today we have proof of millions more. We have a letter from the government's OPA authorizing the hiring of a \$600-an-hour lawyer. This is "with respect to witness preparation" for the power plant scandal testimony of their staff.

Premier, whatever happened to just going into a hearing, putting your hand on the Bible, taking an oath and then standing up and telling the truth?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I apologize for my voice.

It's interesting that the member talks about accuracy in front of the committee. I think all of us are waiting for an apology to the committee and this House for a document that he tabled in the committee, PC document number 5, which he, over and over again, said was redacted. We actually printed off the document from the USB key that was provided to him. It was not redacted. The area that he made such outrageous claims about was, in fact, simply shaded. Perhaps the PC Party needs a new photocopy machine and perhaps the honourable member needs to apologize to this House for making those claims.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will be moving right into identifying ridings, and I will be very terse today—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —including the person who just gave me a compliment.

Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I can tell you that in my role as Honorary Colonel with the Algonquin Regiment we have a sentence: When you're taking flack, you must be over the target, so thank you.

Here's another document, this time from the sole-sourced procurement of outside legal counsel to assist the government with the Mississauga plant cancellation. The cost was \$500,000. I would wonder if this is part of the total cost we keep hearing from the government or if this too will be added on the hydro bills of Ontarians.

Premier, I ask you: How much money is your government spending on outside lawyers for your gas plants cancellation scandal?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member is not going to get away with it by simply dismissing it. This is PC document number 5, which was tabled with the committee. It comes from a USB key that was provided to every party in this House. There is a sentence—I'll give you one example: "Are you moving the gas plant back to Mississauga? Or elsewhere in the GTA?"

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The honourable member claims that it was redacted. He claimed it in the committee. We printed it out off the USB key that was given to the PCs and it says, in shading, "No. There are no plans to locate the plant in Mississauga or elsewhere in the GTA. We are currently..." and I could go on. It is shading. I cannot help that the Progressive Conservative Party does not have money for a new photocopy machine, but that member owes this House and the committee an apology for making those claims.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: When we did go through the hundreds—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: As we go through the hundreds of pages of redacted documents, I did find one that wasn't redacted. This is the same firm that was retained in Mississauga. It was also retained for the Oakville cancellation. This document says that the same rates will apply—the same billing rates. That means yet another—a second \$500,000.

Today we disclosed a \$600-an-hour contract and two \$500,000 contracts. Congratulations, another \$1 million-plus day for the Liberals, all that to be added to the hydro bills of hard-working Ontarians, seniors, families, and businesses.

Premier, you don't need the entire government to lawyer up. You just need to fess up. Will you do that here today and tell us the full cost—

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it doesn't work this way. You can't just ignore the fact that the honourable member went to the committee—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville will come to order. Second and only time. Thank you.

Answer?

Hon. John Milloy: You can't simply come to committee and produce a document which was provided by the government which simply had some highlighting, photocopy it and claim it's redacted. It was not that long ago the honourable member stood up and said there were no Vapour-lock documents; I produced a pile of them. He goes before the committee and says this document was redacted and it was not.

It is time that member apologized to this Legislature and to the committee for what he is claiming.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Your secret deal with the teachers' unions has come with a \$63-million price tag on retirement gratuities. Yesterday, you admitted, "The money has been moved around," so you could pay for the perks. That's \$63 million that could have gone into four schools, technology or textbooks for our students but was instead diverted to unions. This comes at a cost to students in Ontario who have had to suffer through the loss of extracurricular activities and some had to lose school days and even report-card-writing.

So, by "moving the money around," you just rewarded the same unions who jeopardized the future of these same students. The question is quite simple: Why did this Premier sell out our students in this province to the unions at a cost of \$63 million?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Both I and the Minister of Education were clear yesterday that the money that was in the contracts when I came into this office is exactly the same money that is in the contracts today. The savings that was found, \$1.8 billion, is the same money that was saved at the end of this contract.

What we did was we worked with the federations on implementation. There was money that was applied to

different areas within the contract, but the money is the same. There is no additional money in these contracts. The reality is that we want to work with the education sector. We want to make sure that our students have access to extracurricular activities, and we want a respectful relationship with the teachers, the support staff and the school boards. That's our priority.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Wow. It's just wow that she says that doesn't have any money attached to it. Then, I also say that the eHealth system is working just perfectly in this province if she believes this.

Back to the Premier: Yesterday you also came close to admitting that you did in fact reopen the collective agreements that just eight months ago you supported. You said, "We have reopened our respective dialogue," but in your rush for an OSSTF do-over you didn't have a "respective dialogue" with our school boards. In fact, you had no dialogue with them at all. With regulation 274, you usurped and stripped them of their power. Now you're signing on the dotted line for them.

If this agreement is so good for parents and for students and the school boards in this province, why was it not signed by the school boards in Ontario, who are going to have to pay for and implement your new deal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand the politics of division that the member opposite is playing, Mr. Speaker. I understand that she believes it's in her best interests to continue to drive wedges. That's not what I believe. I really believe that it's very important that we have that respectful dialogue with the education sector, that we work with our teachers and our support staff, and that kids have access to excellent education, including extracurriculars.

School boards were at the table, Mr. Speaker. School boards were part of this process. I've been very clear that the process going forward, the collective bargaining process going forward, must have all of the partners at the table. I agree with the member opposite that school boards need to be a part of that dialogue. One of the problems over the last year was that they were not enough a part of the dialogue, and they need to be, going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They were not part of the dialogue at all; you just have to ask them. But let me tell you one thing: If you want to talk about the best interests of the education system, it has been Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus who have stood up for students, parents and teachers who want to teach during the last eight months. We did not cave—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to take a moment to remind members of a couple of things. The first one is, when somebody is putting the question, hearing somebody from the same side yelling out is not help-

ful to the debate, and people answering and having other people on the same side yelling out is not helpful.

The second thing is, I continue to hear members using each other's names, which is not the condition here. It helps to lower the debate instead of raise it. I'm going to remind that you either remark about their title or their riding. Let's leave it at that. It helps with the debate.

Finish, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I simply have this question for the Premier. Her previous leader and the former education minister said there was no new money; we needed Bill 115. Now you're trying to tell us we have lots of money and we can buy off the unions. I want to know: Who's telling the truth—Dalton McGuinty and Laurel Broten, or you and Liz Sandals? I can tell you one thing: The only people who have suffered for the last eight months are kids in elementary schools and secondary schools in this province. We'll continue to stand on their behalf. You won't do it; we will.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There's no new money in the contracts, Mr. Speaker. It's exactly the same money.

For better or worse, I am standing here because of the actions of that party in education. I'm standing here because I have fought for publicly funded education throughout my whole career. I really believe that government should work with education. There were 26 million student days lost under the previous government, Mr. Speaker, because of strikes, because of the hostile environment between the Legislature and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm getting my workout today, and I'm more than earning my money today, actually. What I'm asking for is the civility that everyone else seems to want me to bring, and I can't do it without you. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, what moved me to run provincially was because I believe so deeply in publicly funded education and I was so upset about what was happening under the previous government.

We have worked tirelessly for the last nine and a half years and we're going to continue to work to improve our education system, and we're going to do it in partnership with the teachers, with the support staff and school boards in our system.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

1050

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday in her speech—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. The member from Nepean—Carleton has had enough, and it stops.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is warned.

Please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Three times lucky, Speaker.

My question is to the Premier. Yesterday in her speech to the board of trade, the Premier spoke about the tight fiscal constraints that are currently facing our province. Would she agree that \$1.3 billion annually is a lot of money for Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely, \$1.3 billion is a lot of money. I'm not sure where the leader of the third party is going with this, but I will say, in my remarks to the Toronto board of trade, what I was talking about is the absolute need to make sure that we have investment in infrastructure, particularly in transit in the GTHA, but beyond the GTHA, in roads and in bridges, because that transportation infrastructure is a fundamental priority and condition for economic growth in the province. That's what I was talking about at the Toronto Region Board of Trade.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Over the last decade, the government has invested a lot in no-strings-attached corporate giveaways. Today's combined corporate income tax rate is nearly 50% lower than the average between 1960 and 1990. The HST has dramatically reduced the taxes businesses pay, as has the elimination of capital taxes.

If times are tight, why is the government again planning to help Ontario's largest corporations with yet another writeoff of \$1.3 billion in sales taxes every year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the Minister of Finance has been very clear that some of the suggestions that the leader of the third party has put forward in terms of closing loopholes and making sure compliance is in place—that we need to look at those.

But that does not negate the need to have a serious discussion about finding revenue streams and building transit in the GTHA. We cannot continue to deal with the loss of productivity that is engendered by the congestion and the near-gridlock that we're confronting in the GTHA.

I really would have thought that the third party would have been interested in working with us on this. It does not make sense to me, Mr. Speaker, that the people who travel to work, who want to get home, who are commuting and want a better way to travel—that the third party wouldn't be interested in finding a way to make that happen. That's what needs to take place.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Eglinton—Lawrence will come to order.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I seem to recall something about a \$4-billion withdrawal from Transit City, Speaker, but maybe that's just confusion.

This is what is confusing a lot of people, though—it's confusing a lot of people. They're being told that the cupboards are bare. They're going to have to accept layoffs at hospitals, they're going to have to accept chaos in classrooms and they should also get ready to have their household budgets get hit yet again with another sales tax. While their government is asking them to pay more and more and more, they're telling the biggest corporations in the province that they're going to get yet another tax break.

Does the Premier think it makes sense to ask a working mom to pay more while telling corporations like the Royal Bank of Canada that they actually get a break?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think what doesn't make sense is to ask the working mum to commute for three hours from Scarborough to downtown to her job or to drop off her child at daycare and not have a decent way of getting to her workplace and getting home. That's what doesn't make sense.

I want that mum to be able to have a convenient way of getting to work, a convenient way of getting her child to daycare and a convenient way of getting home so she can spend some time with that child at home. That's what I want. That's what this is about.

The \$4 billion that the leader of the opposition was talking about, that's not money that was taken out. That money is being spent right now on the Eglinton cross-town line. We're building that line.

Again, I implore the member for Toronto–Danforth, the member for Beaches–East York, the member for Parkdale–High Park, the member for Trinity–Spadina and the member for Davenport to join with us. Your constituents want this transit to be built.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've made a final decision: I'll be switching to decaf.

Please, give us the opportunity to get through this professionally.

New question. The leader of the third party.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thanks, Speaker. I would dare say, though, that that working mom's life has become a lot more difficult in the last 10 years while the government in power has been in place.

My next question is to the Premier. The government argues that corporate giveaways are somehow creating jobs. The Premier seems to think that the crisis in manufacturing is a myth, but another 350 jobs were lost last week in Fergus. For people who are losing their household income, the Liberals' job plan is the real fairy tale here in Ontario.

Can the Premier point to the jobs that are actually being created by corporate giveaways?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question as well.

We had the opportunity to speak about Fergus yesterday and the upcoming closure of A.O. Smith. The government has been very proactive on that in terms of—I know that both the Premier and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities have spoken with the leadership and the local member in that riding. We've opened up an action centre to respond to the crisis that that community is experiencing, to make sure that those individuals and the families that they represent are able to have full opportunity going forward.

It's never good news when a closure of this type happens. I've mentioned as well that this is a company with a long, long history in Fergus. It will be difficult for the community, but we're there with them to make sure that we can help them transition as best as we can in this difficult time.

In terms of manufacturing specifically, I'm happy to address that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think it's only my second supplementary, Speaker. I think it's only my second supplementary. It's not my final.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Second, sorry.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thanks, Speaker.

The reality is, the people of Ontario want jobs, not action centres. The government has invested billions of dollars in corporate giveaways, and they seem to be plowing ahead with plans for over a billion more. These new tax breaks will go to some of the biggest financial institutions in the country. The government's giveaways will not help workers in Fergus, but they will help the Royal Bank of Canada, who will be getting a massive tax break while they outsource Canadian jobs. Is this the sort of job creation that our Premier in this province is actually proud of?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: With regard to the part of the question that deals specifically with the Royal Bank and the temporary foreign workers, I know that the leader of the third party understands very clearly—as the PCs do—that it's the PCs' federal cousins in Ottawa and it's the federal government that's responsible for our Temporary Foreign Worker Program. I was certainly pleased to see that Diane Finley, the minister responsible for that program, has—not only has the government committed, federally, to review that program, as they mentioned in their budget, but they're also looking specifically at this question of the RBC issue, of the replacement of RBC employees with temporary foreign workers through outsourcing.

I was looking forward to the opportunity, of course, to speak to the issue of manufacturing. The truth is that we have been creating manufacturing jobs in this province.

We've created 32,000 jobs since the recessionary low. Also, manufacturing is doing much, much better. The sales in manufacturing were up by 6.5% in 2012 compared to the same period in 2011.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary. And I apologize to the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people want to see a plan that works with companies that are actually ready to put people back to work. They want a plan that ties government support to job creation, especially for young people, who are struggling to get started. Instead, they see tax breaks getting handed to Ontario's biggest banks, who aren't hiring people; they're outsourcing jobs.

Is the Premier ready to stop this giveaway and instead invest in a smart strategy that actually helps people looking for jobs in Ontario and not people looking to send those jobs away?

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Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, we are investing in new jobs. The truth is that nearly 400,000 jobs have been created since the bottom of the recession in June 2009. Many of those, as I mentioned, are in the manufacturing sector. Despite what the opposition might like Ontarians to believe, the manufacturing sector is alive and well in Ontario, and we're committed as a government to continue to support it going forward.

In fact, when you compare it with other jurisdictions, whether it's in Canada or around the world, we're doing better. We've brought back all of the jobs that were lost during the recession, and 50% more. We're doing better than the United Kingdom. We're doing better than the United States.

Through the jobs round tables that the Premier has been holding across the province—I think she has had 11 of them so far since becoming Premier—we're hearing from Ontarians, many of them manufacturers and other employers, small and medium- and large-sized businesses, to learn how this province can continue to support these important businesses.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier. Premier, the Ontario PC Party has been clear where we stand when it comes to Ontario's finances: You must control spending if you want to bring down your ballooning deficit and control debt. Controlling your finances means you stop spending money that you don't have.

Your spineless move to pacify the teachers' unions on the backs of everyday Ontarians is deplorable. Your job is to treat everyone fairly—organized labour and ordinary taxpayers in Ontario—but you've buckled under the teachers' union barrage and thrown every other Ontarian under the bus. The seven-month-long siege is evidence of a widening fairness gap in the Ontario workplace. Thousands of public sector workers enjoy higher salaries, guaranteed pensions and special perks that other Ontarians just don't get.

Premier, based on your current education budget, what are the long-term ramifications? Will you stand in your place and pledge that next year the restored perks you've just swallowed won't be at the expense of ordinary taxpayers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I've been clear on what we believe is an imperative: to work with the education sector and make sure that the students in our schools have access to extracurricular activities and that we have a respectful dialogue with the people who work in our schools. We really believe that that is the way to improve the education system. I also know that the party opposite does not hold the same belief in publicly funded education that we do, which is evidenced by their previous actions.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk about our economic progress. We are on track—in fact, we're ahead of schedule—to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. We've restricted overall spending increases. We're supporting small business. We're building a 21st-century workforce. We're ensuring that small and medium businesses have access to capital. We just contributed \$50 million to the \$300-million Venture Capital Fund. All of those are things we're doing to grow the economy and to constrain our spending.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Premier, you don't have to answer me, but you do need to address the millions of Ontarians who can never expect the same perks as those you've given your union cronies. This is a critical time for our province. Your next moves inform nearly 4,000 public sector contracts still up for negotiation. Setting this precedent and collapsing under the guerrilla warfare of organized labour sends a clear message to everyone in this province: The Liberal government is a puppet of the labour unions.

Premier, again, will you state that there will be zero impact as a result of this agreement when the books are opened next year, or will we be in another one of your now-infamous McGuinty-Wynne "oopses"? Premier, tell us now and tell us all: How many education workers, teachers and/or new positions will have to go to pay for these additional perks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Once again I will just repeat what I have said, which is that the money that was in the contracts when I came into this office is the same money that's there now, Mr. Speaker. The \$1.8 billion that we have saved as a result of the contracts that were dealt with by the previous minister and by the previous Premier are the same savings that we are able to realize today.

What has changed, and I talked about it during the leadership, is that I really believe that it's very important that we have a respectful dialogue with the people who teach the children and grandchildren of everyone in this province. I think the only way that we can continue to improve our education system—and remember, our educated workforce is an important condition of economic growth. That's one of the things I never hear the party opposite talk about: how important it is that we have the best education system in the world in order to be able to

grow our economy. That's our priority on this side of the House.

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Speaker, yesterday Mayor Ford said that Toronto has a deal with the province for \$150 million on casino revenue-sharing. The same day, the Premier said that the province does not have a deal at all. They both can't be right. Will the Premier come clean today with Ontarians on the \$150-million sweetheart deal for Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I do appreciate the member asking this question again, but I am going to give him the same answer, Mr. Speaker, and that is that there is no agreement on \$150 million with the city of Toronto. You will have to talk to Mayor Ford about that number. That is not a number I'm familiar with. It's not a number that has anything to do with our conversation with any of the municipalities about casinos.

We've been very clear: The formula across the province is going to be the same formula. There will be no special deals for any jurisdiction, and every jurisdiction is going to have to decide, based on that fair formula, whether they want a casino or not. Municipalities are going to decide that, in conversation, in consultation, with their constituents. That's how it's going to work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: If the Premier can't answer on the \$150 million, perhaps she can answer whether or not the government has a plan for OLG privatization, and does she want to share that plan with the people of Ontario?

We keep hearing of Toronto getting a special deal to be a host site for a casino in downtown Toronto. My question is a very simple one. If there is a sweetheart deal and it's not for \$150 million, how much is the Premier prepared to spend?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite has been a mayor of East York. He is a former mayor of East York. He knows perfectly well that the Premier of the province—he knows this very well, because I have sat with him. I know that he knows that the Premier of the province cannot control what mayors of jurisdictions and mayors of municipalities say.

I have no control over what Mayor Ford or any other mayor in the province chooses to say, so he will really have to speak to the mayor about the numbers that the mayor has put in his letter. I cannot control that, Mr. Speaker.

What I can tell you is there is no special deal for any municipality in the province. Municipalities will be dealing with a fair formula across the province, and they will decide, in consultation with their constituents, whether they want a casino or not, based on that formula.

ACCESSIBILITY TO EMPLOYMENT FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Kim Craitor: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Re-

cently, Minister, media has taken focus on the apparent skill gap that is evident in the Ontario and the Canadian economies. While too many people are underemployed and unemployed, some businesses are reporting they can't find workers to fill jobs that they have. Recently, at the jobs round table, it was noted that some companies are having difficulty finding employees with the right skills they require.

I, like many Ontarians, believe we need to do more to ensure that we're producing workers with the skills we need at home. The article also points to the fact that in order to address the labour and skill shortages, Canada should be doing more to address participation rates among key demographics in our own country, including people with disabilities.

Can the minister explain what Ontario is doing to increase the labour force participation among Ontarians with disabilities?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member representing Niagara Falls. We need to ensure that we're developing and using the full range of talents we have in our workforce. That's why, in the throne speech, when it was announced that my ministry would take on responsibility for the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the AODA, that was a very important decision that was taken at that time.

We know that currently, about one in every seven Ontarians has a disability. Quite frankly, as the population ages, that number is going to increase to nearly 20%, or one in five. That's why we introduced the AODA in 2005, to ensure that Ontario becomes fully accessible by 2025.

We're proud to be one of the first jurisdictions to move from a complaints-based system to a modern regulatory regime that addresses mandated accessibility. We've moved it over to economic development because this is an important issue not only of accessibility and inclusiveness but economic development as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kim Craitor: Thank you, Minister. In my riding of Niagara Falls, and in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, the disability community, led by people such as Sandy Bird, is pleased the government is moving in the right direction by making Ontario fully accessible.

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Ensuring everyone can participate in the community and the workforce is important, as many people with disabilities make great employees and actually are often more productive than their able-bodied counterparts. Studies have shown that people with disabilities are actually less likely to miss work and tend to demonstrate real loyalty and commitment. Yet businesses tend to be reluctant to hire people with disabilities, fearing the high cost of implementation will have a negative impact on their bottom line.

Minister, can you please explain why the changes are necessary and how Ontario plans to benefit by becoming even more accessible?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, greater accessibility means greater opportunities for Ontario and obviously greater employment opportunities for everyone, including people with disabilities.

This is about creating an inclusive society, an inclusive workforce and inclusive employment opportunities for all. That's why Ontario is moving forward with implementing the AODA so that not only Ontarians with disabilities will have better access to employment but, as the member points out, employers will benefit from their skills and their talents.

We know of many employers who have created inclusive workplaces, and cost is not the issue. It's actually good for business. Our government is committed to continuing to provide support to help even more businesses and more employers attract and maintain employees of all abilities.

The economics are clear. The Martin Prosperity Institute estimates that by implementing the AODA, it could bring an additional \$1.6 billion into the province in tourism alone, and revenue in the retail sector amounting to almost 10 billion new dollars.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last time you and I had a conversation in this House, you were kind enough to give me an A for creativity. In return, I think you deserve an A in your mastery of backroom deals.

Last week, we found out your can-do attitude will cost Ontario students at least \$63 million in classroom funding. You've deprived those students to ensure that Working Families's two largest donors, OSSTF and ETFO, have 63 million more reasons to spend another \$3 million in election advertising.

Premier, can you tell us exactly what the \$63 million was earmarked for that has now been redirected to the unions' pockets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, as I've said before, Mr. Speaker, there is no new money being redirected into these contracts. It's money within the contracts that was found that has been able to be applied to some of the implementation of the different parts of the agreement.

I would have thought that the member opposite would have been able to talk to some of his constituents and would have realized that, actually, parents and kids are very pleased that their teachers and support staff are delivering extracurriculars, that there's a different tone in the schools, that the feeling among teachers is changing and they understand that this government, as we have for the last nine and a half years, really wants to work with them to improve the education system. I would have thought he might have had a chance to talk to some constituents about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Back to the Premier: Clearly arithmetic wasn't your strong suit.

I can tell you what the \$63 million should have been earmarked for—and further to your response, I did speak with a young teacher here in Toronto just the other day who teaches at an inner-city school. I was shocked when he told me that for his mandatory civics class of 30 students, there were only 10 textbooks. I was astonished when he also told me that there was not a single computer nor a single Internet connection in any of the classrooms.

These inner-city students are suffering the consequences of your extracurricular political activities. Premier, how do you expect these students to get an A when your failed leadership only provides them with an F in resources?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that for the last nine and a half years, we have put hundreds of millions of dollars into resources for teachers, that there is more money for classroom supplies.

I'm not suggesting that there isn't more to do. I'm not suggesting that there can't continue to be improvements. There absolutely do need to. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is the second time, which means it's the last time before the warning, for the member from Renfrew.

The member from Lanark, you asked the question. I want you to listen to the answer.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, listen. Be a good student.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Eglinton—Lawrence does not help me one bit by doing what he's doing.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The bottom line is that we really believe that it is in the best interests of the children of this province that their teachers are able to work with the government, that they have a respectful dialogue with the government, because if that doesn't happen, then we see what happened under the previous government where the communication broke down, where there were 26 million days lost because of labour action because there was no respectful discussion.

Our priority is to improve our school system.

TIRE RECYCLING

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And Food.

Mr. John Vanthof: —and Food. The minister says she is making it her business to get to understand what goes on in rural Ontario and in the agriculture community. Based on comments from farmers at the Earleton Farm Show last weekend, farmers like Jason Robert, increasing eco fees on agricultural tires from \$15 to \$35 and more without consultation is not a good way to start that conversation, especially when fees in Quebec are \$3.

Not only are we risking costs on eco fees but we're also risking tire businesses all along the border. In fact, it shows a continued lack of understanding and respect for the struggles of Ontario's food producers and businesses along the border.

Will the minister call a halt now to these unfair eco fee charges?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to ask the Minister of the Environment to speak to the supplementary, but I want the member opposite to know—because he and I have had conversations. As my critic, I want him to know that I was aware that the agriculture community was having concerns about the recent increases to the tire recycling costs. I spoke with the Minister of the Environment, and I know the Ontario Tire Stewardship and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have been in conversation. I know that the minister will want to speak to that.

But I was acutely aware that there needed to be a mitigation in this situation, that it was not acceptable in the agriculture community and that the recycling costs were higher than in other jurisdictions, which is exactly why the Minister of the Environment has been working with OTS and the OFA.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, it's strange that producers weren't aware at all. There was no consultation at all with producers before it happened.

Speaker, the Ontario government says it supports extended producer responsibility. That means that tire companies shouldn't be allowed to pass the cost of recycling tires to farmers. It wasn't \$35; it's \$350 for a tire or more. Even the Minister of the Environment says he's deeply disappointed that the use of eco fees by some producers continues. We know there's a problem. Premier, Minister, will you commit to fixing it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can tell the member that as soon as the Premier asked me to meet with the OTS chairman and CEO, I was absolutely delighted to do so. I'm happy to say to the member—there's another note coming in—that, first of all, the Ontario Tire Stewardship assured me that, even though they're arm's length, they're private sector, they're independent, they did consult.

When I met with them, I said there are some major challenges for the farming community. The Premier has indicated that. They sat down with me and said, "We're prepared to go back to the agricultural community to consult once again," and my understanding is that those talks have been very productive and that a lot of people are very optimistic that this matter can be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

So I think we'll have a good-news answer to this eventually. Time will tell, but I want to assure the member that action—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

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COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Mr. Phil McNeely: This question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, community health care is important for my constituents and for all Ontarians. Making local decisions about local health care is critical to planning effectively and ensuring the best outcomes. While the other parties were in power, cuts were made and hospitals were closed. These are not the kinds of changes that put families' minds at ease. When I talk to Ontarians, especially my constituents, they want to be assured that if they need health services they will be locally available.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: Could the minister please inform the House about some of the ways the new Ontario government is working to strengthen community health care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Ottawa—Orléans, the very hard-working member from Ottawa—Orléans, for this important question.

I can assure you that our government is committed to community health centres. That's why I was very pleased to announce, just last week, community capital funding projects that will benefit 17 community projects, including community health centres and aboriginal health access centres. This fulfills another element of our action plan and our efforts to provide Ontarians with the right care at the right time in the right place. It also reinforces our commitment to health equity.

CHCs help strengthen Ontario communities by serving people who face barriers to access in health care, including geography, child care, housing and poverty. CHCs bring together teams of physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, counsellors, community workers and dietitians to provide a comprehensive range of services.

We have almost doubled the number of community health centres, and I am very excited that we will continue to improve access.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for your response. I'm glad to hear that the new Ontario government takes community health care seriously. These investments will certainly help make it easier for families to access the right care at the right time in the right place.

Our rural communities face unique challenges when it comes to providing care. I want to be assured that this government has taken these into consideration. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is being done to strengthen health care in rural communities across the province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for his supplementary.

In fact, just yesterday I had the opportunity to be out and about. I was in Tweed, Ontario, and I was in Lind-

say, Ontario, to announce funding for the creation of a new community health centre in the city of Kawartha Lakes. I was joined by the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

I was in Tweed; I was joined by the member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

I was particularly pleased, when I was in Lindsay, to announce the funding for the centre. In fact, the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, in her former role as a nurse, took my blood pressure and did an excellent job.

Interjection: Are you okay?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I just want to assure you that there was a great pulse there. We'll move on from there.

In fact, the member had this to say about our government—very kind words: “Thank you for forging ahead with great plans. You have a whole community certainly behind these efforts. Thank you for coming to the riding and making such a great announcement.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

You'll notice I didn't do anything about that because you brought that one on by yourself.

Anyway, the member from Cambridge.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the energy minister. New revelations this morning point to the fact that it is not only elected officials and their political staff telling us as little as possible, but government agencies are as well. Just weeks before the OPA released its third batch of documents, we have learned that it hired expensive lawyers to help make the Ontario Power Authority understand what it could say and what it couldn't say.

Mr. Speaker, all we want on this side of the House is the truth. The problem is that the Liberals have consistently been pointing the finger at the OPA, knowing full well that it is the Ontario Liberal Party driving the bus on these cancelled power plants. Ontarians now learn they are out another \$500,000 for more Liberal mistakes.

Will the minister own up to being responsible for this \$500,000 price tag? And while he's at it, will he own up to the \$800-million power plant scandal?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, first of all, it's the responsibility of the different agencies to hire their own counsel; it's not the responsibility of the government.

What I do want to say is, we keep hearing question after question coming up as a result of evidence that's going before the committee. The committee's work is not done yet. The Provincial Auditor is getting ready to report in the foreseeable future, Mr. Speaker. But what we don't hear are any positive policies with respect to energy from the opposition. They did issue a white paper. In their white paper, they wanted to privatize OPG. They want to privatize Hydro One. This is what the Toronto Sun says: “Hudak should keep in mind the last Tory government in Ontario that tried to do that with electri-

city generation, promising it would lead to lower hydro rates.

“Instead, it led to the exact opposite—rates skyrocketed amid rampant Tory patronage....”

Mr. Speaker, I want to hear what their policy is. I want them to be accountable for their policy. What they're promising to do now in energy they've tried before. It was a complete disaster and rates went up by 30%.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, Mr. Speaker, the energy minister is actually incorrect. The question that I just asked wasn't about committee testimony; it was about a leaked document the OPA produced to us, so let's be honest about that.

We have listened intently to the Ontario Power Authority's press conference on February 21 of this year, and what a train wreck that was. Jim Hinds and Colin Andersen evaded questions for the better part of an hour and felt that \$500,000 of taxpayer money gave them the right to label questions they didn't like as inappropriate. Can you believe that, Mr. Speaker? They thought that media questions posed to them were inappropriate.

We are here on this side of the House in pursuit of accountability and transparency while you are spending more and more money on lawyers that get us further and further away from the truth.

Minister, why is this government insistent on telling us so little every step of the way when your Premier made such a production of your new-found pursuit of openness and transparency?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the Premier's position on the gas plants and on the committees on this side of the House. The Premier led the initiative to expand the mandate. The Premier has offered to go and be at committee. The Premier has offered to open up every ministry to be available to provide documentation. That's something that they have not taken advantage of.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that we have been open, we have been transparent, and we have directed the Auditor General to come forward. The Auditor General will be independent. He will be neutral. He has access to all the documents. He has access to witnesses under oath. Let's await his report, because I would rather listen to what the Auditor General has to say about the truthfulness of what went on, the veracity of what went on, rather than these people, who are trying to count the number of angels on the head of a pin, and they're misdirecting all the facts, misrepresenting all the facts when they come into this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister will withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Two hundred and ninety cancer patients have been losing

sleep in Windsor since finding out that their chemotherapy drugs were watered down, and so have their families and friends. Facing cancer is hard enough. Facing uncertainty like this makes it worse.

When will this government allow Ontario's Ombudsman, a truly independent third party—in fact, I think the Minister of Energy was just talking about the independence and transparency of our legislative officers. The Ombudsman is one of those officers. So why won't the Premier, or will the Premier, have the Ombudsman investigate what went wrong so that we can assure that it never happens again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for this question. It gives me an opportunity to update the House on our moving forward on understanding exactly what happened. This is a completely unacceptable situation. It is imperative that we understand what happened and how we can make sure it never happens again.

Speaker, yesterday the working group met. It includes representatives from London Health Sciences Centre, Windsor Regional Hospital, Lakeridge Health, Peterborough Regional Health Centre, the Ontario Hospital Association, Cancer Care Ontario, the Ontario College of Pharmacists, Health Canada and our ministry. In addition, we will be adding representation from New Brunswick because they too are affected by this.

Speaker, I can assure you that everyone in the health care sector is determined to understand what happened, and we will be appointing an independent third party person to review the entire cancer supply—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

1130

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, not only did this mistake put lives in jeopardy, including that of a seven-year-old Windsor boy, but it shook public confidence in our health care system. Windsorites deserve peace of mind, and they need answers. Only a completely transparent and completely independent investigation will satisfy them.

Why won't this government allow Ontario's Ombudsman—Ontario's neutral, unbiased, independent Ombudsman, who already has all of the resources in his office to do this work—to get to the bottom of what happened?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have the same goal. I think we are on completely common ground when we want to understand what happened, and we must restore the confidence of Ontario's patients.

Ontario has one of the finest, if not the finest, cancer care systems in the world. We are internationally recognized as having excellent cancer care, the best survival outcomes, but we must continue to be ever-vigilant. I think it's very important that the person who leads this review must have expertise specific to this problem. This is an issue that requires that expertise, and that's why we will be shortly moving forward, announcing that third-party reviewer.

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Sports fans and all hockey fans in my riding were pleased to hear recently that Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, through its MLSE Foundation, has partnered with a great organization called Right to Play through their Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth initiative called the PLAY initiative. I know that our government, the Ontario government, is one of the founding partners of the PLAY initiative and has contributed to the expansion of this great program in Ontario.

Now, we've all heard about the success of this initiative and how it's had a very positive effect on First Nations youth in Ontario, who are learning important life skills through both sport and recreation.

So would the minister please inform this House as to how the current government is continuing to support the program?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question. The Right to Play is a foundation that was founded by John Koss, who, interestingly, was an Olympic gold medal power skater. He recognized the need to teach aboriginal children discipline, ambition and all of those skills that would enable them to really become better participants in life later on.

He set up the foundation. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs has contributed \$3 million to it, and we went out and found a private partner, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment. Larry Tanenbaum, who is the CEO of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, stepped forward and has contributed that amount of money.

What it does is it helps aboriginal students learn those—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You have a certain amount of time to answer your question.

Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you. It's great to hear about the difference this program is making in First Nations communities all across Ontario.

My constituents will also be pleased to hear that PLAY is helping aboriginal youth improve their health, their self-esteem and their leadership skills through participation in sports and play activities. It sounds like such a great program, I'm sure many of us would like to see this expanded, and what we'd like to see is kids in all 133 First Nations communities in Ontario have the same access to this program.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is our government going to do to build on this success, and how is it going to expand this program to make it available to more communities across the province of Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: I was in Manitoulin Island on Friday and we set up one of the Right to Play projects. What we're doing now is we've got 42 First Nations communities in which Right to Play is participating and we've got three urban aboriginal organizations in which Right to Play is participating. We've created 44 jobs for

aboriginal leaders in those communities to develop coaching skills and the like. We're putting about 1,000 aboriginal children a week through these programs. I can tell you, I was up there with Larry Tanenbaum; Wendel Clark, the Toronto Maple Leafs hockey player; Bruce Kidd; Sammi Jo Small, the female Olympic hockey player; and John Koss. The four of us sat down. We opened up a facility on Manitoulin Island, and you would not believe the looks that you saw on those aboriginal children's faces. They were happy. They had a taste for ambition.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to remind the members that on both questions and answers, when I stand, you sit. There is a certain amount of time that you are allotted to put the question; there's a certain amount of time allotted to put the answer. Some of you have got that down to a really fine art, to the second. Others seem to want to continue to do the things that—when I sat in the opposition benches and the back benches of the government, I learned how to play that game, so I know how it's played. As far as the decorum, my concern is again the fact that you are personalizing these kinds of discussions that are taking place, and it races to the bottom, and I'm not going to participate in that.

I'm challenging you at all times to race to the top. The way you treat each other is a good way in which we can show decorum in this place. It's my job and my responsibility as the Speaker to do that, but I can't do it alone.

All right; new question.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is for the Premier. Premier, six days ago you stated that Ontario's manufacturing job losses were a myth. Four days ago we learned that Ontario lost 15,000 private sector jobs during the month of March alone. Some 5,700 of these jobs were good, well-paying manufacturing jobs being chased from Ontario by the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal legacy of high energy rates and unnecessary, job-killing red tape.

Premier, other than conversations, what have you done with your time steering Dalton McGuinty's sinking Liberal ship?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As always, I appreciate a question from my esteemed colleague across the way, my critic. I don't know why, though, he insists on continuing to beat down Ontario employers, including our manufacturers. He knows as well as I do that job creation is variable. We did lose some jobs last month, of course. The month before we actually gained 35,000 jobs. I know he knows as well as I do that of the almost 400,000 jobs that

had been created in this province, many of them manufacturing jobs—out of those 400,000 jobs created since June 2009 more than 90% of those jobs are full-time positions. They are meaningful, important jobs. I know that, as I do, he wants to continue to support these industries and appreciate—

Interjections.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There's a rather elevated discussion taking place by two members. I'd like them to take it outside; continue it somewhere else.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The fact—I know he knows this—that Ontario is outpacing almost every other jurisdiction, not only in North America but around the world. We got back all those jobs that were lost. Like me, why isn't he proud of Ontario's businesses, our manufacturing sector—and boost them and talk them up and help us find the supports that they need to succeed?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Here is a fact: This Premier—like her predecessor—and this government have made Ontario a have-not province where 600,000 men and women are unemployed today. The only myth is that the Wynne Liberals have any sort of a plan to grow our economy.

With Peterborough, London, St. Catharines, Brantford and Kitchener-Waterloo all experiencing some of the highest unemployment rates in the country, it is time for urgent action. Premier, stop the digging and stop the nonsense. Some 600,000 unemployed men and women across Ontario don't want to hear the same old McGuinty answers that we have heard 100 times before. I'm proud that Tim Hudak and the PC Party have put forward a dozen policy papers while you've done nothing.

Will your budget include any real measures to help grow our economy and actually create jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know he has his figure; I have my figure of nearly 400,000 jobs created. That's the path that we're on as the government. It's important that we support that.

When it comes to manufacturing, I don't need to say it again but I have to say that—even in his own riding with Lambton Conveyor, that great manufacturing facility. In fact, it was the first project approved by the new Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, in your riding—I'm sure you were there supporting it—creating 110 new jobs in the manufacturing sector. I can't understand why the member opposite voted against the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, as did his party.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nipissing on a point of order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I stand on a point of order under section 23(h), allegations against member. The House leader has made an allegation against another member: me. Speaker, I stand here and say to you that I did not

present the same document at committee that he presented here today. I tabled a document from Carolyn Calwell that when viewed on the computer is completely blacked out. It is completely redacted. I challenge—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order. If there was an allegation made by the member, I would hold them responsible because I did not know the details of what he is talking about. So, therefore, I would offer any member at any time to either correct their record or not to do that. I did not interpret it as such. So thank you to the member.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Wellington—Halton Hills on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I believe I heard the Minister of Economic Development and Trade say that the action centre at A.O. Smith, formerly GSW, was “open,” present tense. I believe that the company has not yet even been contacted by the provincial government and I would ask—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing. I have heard enough of what the member was saying, that I was going to make a ruling. So when I stand, you sit.

Number two, the member will withdraw what he said, the one word he used, he will withdraw.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I would ask the government to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do acknowledge the member's point of order, however, any member that makes a statement that needs to be corrected, they have to correct the record themselves. I would hold all members honourable enough to do so if their record is not correct in a statement.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Timmins—James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: In regard to question period this morning, the member from Oakville asked a question to which—I think we can all support what that program is trying to do. I don't think there's any argument on the benefit of the program, but clearly what was being set up was a ministerial statement. As in section 37 of the standing orders, it wasn't urgent public business that was being dealt with; what you had was a set-up for a statement.

I would argue that if this House at times gets out of order, that does not help. I would ask you to be more vigilant in not allowing those types of questions to be asked.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order. My commitment is that I will be as vigilant as I always am with ensuring that the

“speak” in terms of the government is directed to government policy. As such, I would remind all members that that is their responsibility. Thank you very much.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There is another point of order. The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane on a point of order.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to take this opportunity to correct the record. In a question that I directed to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, I stated that eco fees had risen to \$35 a tire. That should have been \$350 a tire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order. The member can correct his record, and I thank him. This—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Holy mackerel. I really do think that that's a little bit over the top. When I'm trying my best, I would hope that you would too.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIMS

Mr. John Yakabuski: Last Saturday, the township of South Algonquin hosted a meeting on the Algonquin land claim agreement in principle, which involved a presentation from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Municipalities were invited to share their input, as were citizens from the affected areas.

A number of concerns were raised, such as what criteria were used in the selection of each parcel of the 117,000 acres of crown land slated for transfer? Land-owners adjacent to the affected parcels are worried how their right to enjoy the land and access to their properties will be impacted.

One parcel of land within the township of South Algonquin contains eight lakes currently being stocked by the ministry. Would these programs continue to operate once that land is transferred to private ownership? It was made clear that hunting and fishing is as much a part of the cultural heritage of non-Algonquins as it is the culture of the Algonquins.

The repeated refrain of all there was that of the absolute lack of any real consultations with the people who will be affected most when this agreement is finalized. Eighty per cent of the lands being transferred are within my riding, and I share their concerns as their elected official that I was never consulted in any way of the inequitable affect this agreement would have on the people of my riding.

This agreement has taken 20 years of negotiations to get this far. Rushing it through now without giving those

affected more input is not the way to go. As the old saying goes, measure twice, cut once.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure, as always, to rise. I'm wearing red today—sort of red; kind of an orangey red—which, of course, is not an easy thing for a New Democrat to do. I'm doing it because today is equal pay for equal work day, and the Equal Pay Coalition was in the House.

Sadly, years later, the situation is still the same: Women make 72 cents for every dollar that men make. In fact, the reason that I tabled a motion to call for today as equal pay for equal work day is that it takes women till April 9 to make as much money as men make January 1. That's wrong.

Here's what they're calling for: They're calling for closing the gap as a human rights priority; raising awareness through annual equal pay days and education; closing the gender pay gap; enforce and expand pay equity laws; implement employment equity laws and policies; promote access to collective bargaining; increase the minimum wage—a favourite; provide affordable and accessible child care; and mainstream equity compliance into government laws and policies as well as workplaces and businesses. This is what they're calling for.

We're asking for this government to act. At the very least, make a day every year, like other jurisdictions around the world, equal pay for equal work day so we raise awareness among employers. That's the very least we can do, Mr. Speaker, don't you think?

JAMES “FERGY” BROWN

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in the House today to honour the memory of Mr. James Fergus Brown, who passed away late last week. Fergy Brown gave decades of his life to representing and improving his community.

Mr. Brown grew up in the Mount Dennis neighbourhood in York South–Weston and served this country as a member of the RCAF Bomber Command during the Second World War. After the war, he owned a local pharmacy that became a neighbourhood institution.

Fergy Brown was first elected to York city council in 1969 and over the course of his career would serve as a member of the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, a member of the city of York's board of control and Metro Toronto council, head of Metro Toronto's social service committee, a member of the Toronto Transit Commission, and mayor of the city of York.

Mr. Brown demonstrated his commitment to the community by founding Children First, an initiative to highlight the importance of early education and care, as well as serving for three decades on the board of the Learning Enrichment Foundation, including serving as president. He also served on the board of York Community Services and the Harold and Grace Baker Centre for seniors.

He had a motto that I share: “It's amazing how much you can get done if you don't care about who gets the credit,” he would say.

Mr. Brown was a dedicated public servant who always gave back to the community, and I was honoured to award him a Diamond Jubilee Medal last year. On behalf of my constituents, I extend my sympathies to his family and friends and my thanks for his many years of service to the community and the lives he impacted.

MARGARET THATCHER

Mr. Toby Barrett: We recognize the passing of one of the most important and influential politicians of the 20th century. Across the globe, people are recalling the impact and far-reaching international legacy of a shopkeeper's daughter, the iron-willed Margaret Thatcher.

As the first British female Prime Minister, in 1979 Thatcher took the reins and guided Britain, then the sick man of Europe, to economic and international heights, ruling the Conservative Party and Great Britain itself through three successive elections with grassroots Conservative values—tax cuts, deficit reduction and international strength.

Thatcherism boosted the free market and reduced the role of the state. On the home front, Margaret Thatcher curbed union militancy and privatized state industries. Millions who previously had little stake in the economy found themselves able to own their council houses and buy shares in former state businesses.

Along with Ronald Reagan, Prime Minister Thatcher was instrumental in ending the Cold War. She narrowly escaped death in an IRA attack. She achieved victory in the Falklands. She was, as Richard Longworth of the Chicago Tribune reported in 1989, “perhaps the most admired, hated, fascinating, boring, radical and conservative leader in the Western world.”

We shall not see her like again.

BOB OLDFIELD

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today I want to tell you about a super-nice man from my riding. His name is Robert John Oldfield, but we call him Bob. Bob is a nice-looking man with a big heart. He is quick with a joke and a smile and knows how to have a good time. No matter what you need, Bob is there to help out.

The door to my office came off; Bob dropped by and fixed it. Disaster struck in the bathroom—water all over the floor. Who do you call? Bob to the rescue. Our float on the Santa Claus parade needed more light. Wouldn't you know it? Bob just happened to have a generator and a bigger set of speakers, so not only could the kids see us better, they could hear us as well.

For the last 20 years, Bob has worked every election campaign. He has loaded and unloaded more trucks than you can count and put up more signs than you can imagine. If we needed him, he was there. The minute you met Bob, you wanted to be his friend.

I guess that explained why over 250 of us gathered last weekend to celebrate his life.

Bob is my co-worker Lynne Oldfield's husband. To Lynne, Glenn and Nigelle, Kevin and Melanie, Melissa and Andrew, Abrielle and Owen, thank you for sharing Bob with us. Bob, you left us way too soon. May you rest in peace.

GARY SHEPHERD

Mr. Grant Crack: Last week I, along with the residents of my hometown of Alexandria and the township of North Glengarry, was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Gary Shepherd on Wednesday, April 3, 2013, at the age of 68. Gary was a well-respected, successful local businessman, having operated a school bus business, a local sports shop and a Honda dealership. In partnership with his brother Rodney, Shepherd's, as the business was known locally, was a gathering point every day where locals would come in and chat about local issues or just hang out. It became well known that if it was news, Shepherd's heard it first.

Gary was also a community leader, having been active in the early years of the local Junior B hockey club, the Alexandria Glens, but perhaps is most remembered for his commitments to his community, having served on the local municipal council for almost 22 years.

I had the privilege to serve as mayor with Gary Shepherd for 11 years on the Alexandria and then North Glengarry municipal councils, and his well-rounded approach to issues resulted in him being acclaimed to council many times. Gary was unbeatable.

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During these difficult times, my thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, Colleen, their son, Lee, daughter, Wendy, and their families, and also to Gary's brother, Rodney, and his wife, Darlene. Rest in peace, my friend.

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Ms. Laurie Scott: On March 28, I had the privilege of attending a ceremony at Alexandra Public School in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. It's located in Lindsay. The event was to mark the donation of a new Elmer the Safety Elephant costume to the Kawartha Lakes Police Service. The costume is used extensively at school and community events and parades in Kawartha Lakes.

The costume was donated by Ruth Barrett and her family. In 1947, Ruth's father, Toronto police traffic inspector Charles J. Lytle, created Elmer the Safety Elephant as a tool in Toronto public schools for teaching traffic safety to children. Incredibly, just one year later, traffic accidents involving children under the age of 16 had dropped by an astonishing 40% in Toronto.

Other communities quickly requested that the program come to their towns and cities through the Ontario Safety League. In 66 years, the Elmer flag and his famous seven safety rules have become a standard fixture of public

schools throughout Ontario. Amazingly, other communities experienced the same dramatic improvement in child traffic safety as Toronto did in that first year. Many of us learned the basic rules of traffic safety from Elmer, and, like an elephant, we hopefully have never forgotten.

I'd like to congratulate Ruth Barrett and her family for the legacy which her father has left Ontario, which has undoubtedly saved countless lives, and for the family's generosity in donating a new Elmer costume to the Kawartha Lakes Police Service. I'm honoured to have been part of that memorable occasion.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Today I would like to recognize the hard work of a family in Schomberg in the township of King in my great riding of Oak Ridges-Markham for their fundraising efforts on behalf of their daughter Rebecca, who has cystic fibrosis.

Katherine Edwards and Stephen Ruppert have raised \$11,612.72 for Cystic Fibrosis Canada over three annual fundraisers. This year's fundraiser drew 120 community members to Schomberg Community Hall.

Cystic Fibrosis Canada has helped to improve the lives of those living with the disease by working to develop new therapies and expand access to high-quality care, greater advocacy and increased life expectancy for those with the disease.

Katherine and Stephen found out that their daughter Rebecca, known as Bexx, had cystic fibrosis when she was three months old. At nine months, she lost the function of her pancreas. Now, at age three, she takes enzyme capsules to digest her food and needs physiotherapy treatments to keep her lungs clear.

Katherine and Stephen want to do all they can to help other families who experience even greater difficulties in coping with the disease. One in 3,600 Canadians is born with cystic fibrosis, making it the most common potentially fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children.

Thank you, Katherine and Stephen, for your efforts in raising awareness in our community and for helping to make a difference in the lives of those living with cystic fibrosis.

DON MACKINNON

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to recognize Don MacKinnon, president of the Power Workers' Union, who has been named to the Order of Ontario and who hails from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Don MacKinnon of Chatsworth has been a lifelong advocate of Ontario's energy industry and authority on its electricity system who has devoted his career to creating safe, quality jobs for Ontarians.

Don has a reputation as a skilled and innovative negotiator. He uses mutual-gains approaches to achieve settlements that address business needs while fully respecting the rights and values of employees. His innova-

tive approach to labour relations has become a model for effective labour management.

MacKinnon began his career at Ontario Hydro in 1971 and is a lineman by trade. For over a decade, he served as the Power Workers' Union vice-president, before becoming president in 2000.

Created in 1986, the Order of Ontario, the province's highest official honour, recognizes the highest level of individual excellence and achievement in any field. The Order of Ontario recognizes extraordinary Ontarians who have made a lasting mark on the province, the country and the world. This group of remarkable citizens has made a difference in the lives of so many people over the course of a lifetime, and I'm proud to be standing up here, congratulating and recognizing Don MacKinnon on this noble achievement.

Mr. MacKinnon's dedication to Ontario's energy industry, along with work in labour relations, is to be commended. I'd like the House to join me in congratulating Don MacKinnon on his extraordinary achievement and wishing him all the best in future endeavours.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BEECHWOOD CEMETERY COMPANY ACT, 2013

Mr. McNeely moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr8, An Act respecting The Beechwood Cemetery Company.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT (RELATIONSHIP WITH GRANDPARENTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE (RELATION AVEC LES GRANDS-PARENTS)

Mr. Craitor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents / Projet de loi 48, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne la relation entre un enfant et ses grands-parents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Kim Craitor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to read from the explanatory notes.

The bill amends the Children's Law Reform Act. Currently, subsection 21(1) of the act provides that a parent of a child or any other person may apply to the court for certain orders respecting custody or access to a child. An amendment to that subsection specifies that a grandparent may apply for such an order.

Secondly, currently subsection 24(2)(a)(i) provides that where a court makes a determination relating to certain applications in respect of custody or access to a child, the court shall consider, among other things, the love, affection and emotional ties between the child and each person entitled to or claiming custody of or access to the child. An amendment of that subclause specifies that that includes a grandparent.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my two co-sponsors of this bill. The member from Parkdale-High Park, from the NDP, thank you very much; and the member from Whitby-Oshawa riding, thank you very much for co-sponsoring the bill.

MOTIONS

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I believe we have the unanimous consent of all the hard-working members on all sides of the House to put forward a motion without notice. It's regarding late shows.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General is asking for unanimous consent on the motion. Do we agree? Agreed.

Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I move that the late show requested by the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, directed to the Minister of the Environment, scheduled for tonight, be rescheduled to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 17, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for petitions. I think I'll go back to a rotation I'm very familiar with. The member from Durham.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's a distinct pleasure today, having been working the other few days that I wasn't here.

"Whereas under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors

are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario;

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"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs"—and red tape—"to comply with the new requirements"—by the Wynne government—"of regulation 319/08;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process. Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08. Furthermore we ask the minister to work with the bed and breakfast industry to find simplified, safe solutions for smaller operations (three or four guests.)"

I sign this with the greatest respect, asking the Minister of Health to endorse—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
Petitions?

GREENWATER PARK

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the present government of Ontario should reverse the closure of Greenwater provincial park in Cochrane, Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reverse the closure of Greenwater provincial park, to allow the park to remain fully operational and open enabling people from all over to enjoy camping and visiting on its grounds..."

I fully agree, affix my signature, and give it to the page.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough-Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough-Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough-Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

"Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough-Agincourt riding; and

"Whereas the commission's report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough-Agincourt community; and

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough-Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough-Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough-Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401."

I fully support this petition, and I will sign it and give it to page Annie.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Randy Hillier: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I agree with this petition and will affix my name to it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt:

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear

repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;..."

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's oversight mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition, Madam Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask page Madeline to bring it to the Clerk.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I've got a petition this afternoon from the people of Agincourt. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough–Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough–Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough–Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

"Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough–Agincourt riding; and

"Whereas the commission's report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough–Agincourt community; and

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough–Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough–Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401."

I agree with this, Speaker, and will sign it and send it down with Sophia.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a petition on behalf of the constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the United Senior Citizens of Ontario has expressed its concerns over the high costs of parking at hospitals in Ontario on behalf of its more than 300,000 members; and

"Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income" in the McGuinty-Wynne government today "and cannot afford these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association Journal has said in an editorial that parking fees are a barrier to health care and add additional stress to patients who have enough to deal with;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" and the Minister of Health "as follows:

"That Ontario's members of provincial Parliament and the Kathleen Wynne government take action to abolish parking fees for all seniors when visiting hospitals."

I'm pleased to sign and support it on behalf of seniors in my riding.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

"Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

"Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

"Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

"Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a 'custodial' care arrangement; and

"Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

"Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

"(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

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"(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

"(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services."

I couldn't agree more. I am going to sign this. I'm going to give it to Kamryn to be—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion, which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I agree with this petition and I'll affix my name to it.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces" in Canada;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;....

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:"

To "suspend the decision to ... increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

I gladly affix my name to this petition.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'll be quick, Cheri.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

"Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

"Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it with Jason to the table.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by up to 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to give it to Louis and sign it to be delivered to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time for petitions has ended.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 8, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm feeling a little under the weather today, so I'm going to use my quiet voice. I ask you to bear with me, and I hope the wonderful people who are working in the booth there translating don't have their ears blown out from a couple of hacks and coughs along the way. Nevertheless I'm very pleased to contribute to this discussion.

I'm pleased to be able to rise and add some comments on the debate on Bill 11, which is intended to remedy some of the causes of the Ornge air ambulance scandal.

As my caucus's critic pointed out in her initial remarks of this debate, this is not the first time that this bill has been brought before us. We debated this very same bill during the last session of the House. At that time, it was known as Bill 50. Unfortunately, it died on the order paper when the House was prorogued unnecessarily in October. But I don't want to dwell on prorogation, just like I don't want to dwell on the tens of millions of dollars that were wasted by Ornge because of the government's failure to ensure proper accountability measures were in place in the first place.

The problem with this House is that, too often, important debates have become politicized, and instead of getting answers that taxpayers deserve, we end up with grandstanding and, dare I say, witch hunts. The goals

shift from looking for what went wrong to scoring political points, and in the end that does not serve the taxpayers' best interests.

Unfortunately, this bill doesn't correct the problems that exist, it doesn't restore the public's faith in our province's air ambulance system, and it does not properly close the door to the abuses that have already happened. As the member from Nickel Belt pointed out, this bill falls short in some pretty important areas, the two biggest being the failure to give the province's Ombudsman oversight powers for this agency, and the second is the fact that it continues to shield Ornge from Government Agencies, both of which are very important tools for holding the board, management, staff and the government accountable for the decisions that are made.

A minute ago, I spoke about witch hunts and the over-politicization of scandals. One tool that we have in Ontario is an impartial arbitrator known as the Ombudsman. His job is to find out what actually happened, not to lay blame. Why aren't we doing everything in our power to ensure that we can get actual answers and not political answers? It just does not make sense.

I've said it before, but it bears repeating: We, as legislators, are dealing with taxpayers' dollars. It's not our money to do with however we choose. The money we manage belongs to the people of this province. It's dollars collected from hard-working families in Red Lake, from seniors struggling to pay their bills in the Rainy River valley and from people who are seeing their property taxes rise in Dryden and in other communities across the north. These people have sent us here to use those dollars in their best interests, but I don't see their interests being represented in this bill.

Each and every dollar that was wasted on this and every other scandal is a dollar out of their pockets, a dollar out of their bank accounts and one less dollar to feed their families with. I'm sure they would understand if that dollar were going to put a new health centre in Ignace, a dialysis machine in a local hospital or to clear up the waiting list for home care, but it's not. It's going to buy motorcycles to decorate offices. It's going to inappropriate loans for CEOs. It's going everywhere but where it needs to go, and we're not taking every step that we possibly can to ensure that this type of waste, this type of wanton disregard for people's hard-earned dollars, never happens again.

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These omissions were understandable last year, when the government scrambled to put this bill in place. We could understand it then, and I think we were all willing to give the government the benefit of the doubt when we voted to send this bill to committee, to have these shortcomings pointed out and to address them. But that didn't happen. There were months and months of time when officials could have reviewed this bill and its serious shortcomings and brought a vastly improved bill forward to us today.

Instead, we have virtually the same bill that was initially introduced about a year ago, and that is very dis-

appointing. It's almost as though the government is more committed to finding a way to safeguard itself from political fallout if something goes wrong than it is to providing the citizens of this province with value for their money, with services they can trust, and with the oversight and accountability they deserve.

I am of the belief that when our money is spent by governments of all political stripes, it needs to be transparent. If a government can't stand behind each decision it has made, maybe that decision should not have been made. As I've said, the money being used so freely belongs to the people of this province, and this is their government. We have an obligation to ensure that we get value for each and every penny. As it presently stands, this is not happening, so it means we're not doing a lot of things correctly.

Maybe what we need to do is pause, examine the system, examine the accountability mechanisms that are in place and see what we can do to ensure that someone is held responsible, because this mess with Ornge can't all be at the hands of Chris Mazza. Certainly, he is the person being demonized by the media and by our elected officials, but somewhere along the line there has to be an enabler. And I don't think the processes are in place right now, or will be—you know, they're not included in this bill as proposed—to cure the ills of our air ambulance system or fix health care in the province of Ontario. Maybe that's the problem.

We have created a system that is so big and so complex that no one can monitor it effectively. One of the criticisms of Don Drummond, the economist who was hired at great expense to the province, was that we have a tendency in Ontario to deal with faulty programs by just creating another one, just layering on another program, service or department. The end result is that not only does this not make sense, because it is terribly inefficient and expensive, but it makes a confusing mess to regulate and monitor.

As I said, this is advice we paid dearly for in this province. I think we need to listen to this advice and we need to start to implement it. I'm not suggesting that we necessarily implement every single thing that was recommended, but there are some very key things here that we can implement that will ultimately save us as taxpayers a lot of money.

In summary, there are three main issues that are not addressed by this bill. They are the fact that there is no oversight by the provincial Ombudsman, or there won't be. It still will not be granted. Ornge will continue to operate as an organization that cannot be called before Government Agencies. And this bill cannot obscure the fact that the Ministry of Health has refused to look at their own role in this, and the reality is that this bill will do nothing to prevent future scandals from occurring at other government-funded organizations.

This is nothing more than feel-good legislation. It does nothing to prevent future scandals. That's a point that bears repeating. There's no substance to this. It's really terrible. We expected a more substantive bill to come

back. We wanted a better, stronger iteration of this bill. After all, the government has had a number of months to improve it. That being said, I believe that the discussion we're having around respect for taxpayers' money, around what we can do differently, what kinds of checks and balances need to be in place to make sure this doesn't happen again—these are very worthwhile discussions. I do believe that we need to continue these discussions. The best place for that would be sending this bill, however weak it is, to committee so that we can have something stronger come forward. For that reason, I'll be supporting it going to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me say at the onset that I thought the member from Kenora-Rainy River made a very thoughtful presentation this afternoon on this particular bill, Bill 11. She did it making a speech when she's not feeling up to par, but I want to assure her constituents in Kenora-Rainy River that she did a very admirable job this afternoon.

Let's get to the substance of the discussion here today. I think it's about time we wind up this debate and get it off to committee. The member clearly said in her words that this is a weak edition of the bill. Okay, I accept her observation about the bill. So let's wind up debate this afternoon, and let's get this bill off to committee.

We're in a minority government. There are all kinds of opportunities to make amendments, to strengthen it from their perspective. But this ongoing discussion—we can keep talking all we want, but we really need to get this bill on to committee and make the changes that the opposition are suggesting. I think that's very important.

What do we have here? Amongst other things that we're going to do in Bill 11 as proposed, before it gets amended, as it will in committee—Ornge has appointed a new patient advocate. We've installed new medical interiors in the helicopters—much better than the Sea Kings that are operating in Ottawa, and hopefully Minister MacKay will make some changes there soon. We've expanded the service in Thunder Bay. We've established a dedicated patient flight service in northern Ontario; northern Ontario residents deserve this, and they're now getting it. We've created a whistle-blower policy. We've submitted the first quality improvement plan.

Madam Speaker, with these elements now in position, we can take the time, get it to committee, wind up the debate and get those kinds of amendments that they're talking about. I think that's the way this bill should go in the not-too-distant future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen, and I commend the member for Kenora-Rainy River, who is standing up for her community and putting a voice to something that she knows is wrong. The hearings that are occurring in Ontario are just one example of the waste and scandalous reputation of the existing Ornge air ambulance system.

Our concern remains on this side. There needs to be a discussion on this. The member from Peterborough, who just spoke, is trying to shut that discussion down. That is shameful—completely.

I can tell you this: The suggestion at the very end of his remarks was to say there's whistle-blower protection. Well, it's clear to us that there isn't whistle-blower protection. In fact, as we understand it, it limits the scope of that protection. The bill does not provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers.

It's one more example of saying one thing and doing something else. In fact, the minister, who's here today—and I don't say that with any indication except that she's here—knows that she has the power already to do almost everything that's in this bill.

What it really demonstrates is that there's a lack of leadership. This is an attempt to sort of change the channel, to change the channel to say, "If we pass this, it will be better." It's a broken system designed by a broken government that already has the tools to control it and a system that clearly even the Auditor General said was completely out of control.

Chris Mazza, the former CEO, I think he may still be on the payroll. I'm pretty sure, if you check, there's some kind of clauses that—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The minister, in her two minutes, may want to respond to that, but it's my impression that he probably is still being paid. I'm concerned that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I just remind the member to keep his comments to the speech we heard.

Mr. John O'Toole: The bill, Bill 11, of course, is the bill that we are talking to. I was talking about the administrative structure that was—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?
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Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to comment on the speech made by my esteemed colleague from Kenora-Rainy River. It shows her commitment to her constituents. She's not feeling too well today and she's still here talking about health care for her constituents. I think that shows her mettle.

She brought up some very salient points. I think one of the most important ones is regarding oversight. It's a weak bill; the Minister of Rural Affairs agreed with my colleague from Rainy River that this is potentially a very weak bill. We're wondering why they drafted it like that, but if you know it's a weak bill, you'd think you could—especially because this is the rerun; this is the rerun of the bill, so it could have been a lot stronger.

I think the one thing that we're all left wondering and the people at home and the people of my riding are all left wondering is, what do the folks on the other side have against the Ombudsman? Because really, everyone who has spoken, everyone in my riding and in the riding of Kenora-Rainy River knows that if you have a problem with a government agency, you call the Ombudsman.

What is the problem with the Ombudsman? You're creating government inspectors. Well, people don't know who those people are; they know what the Ombudsman's office is.

Why not make it simpler? Everyone who's spoken on this side of the House has said let's let Ombudsman oversight handle this issue. What have you got against the Ombudsman?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Certainly I'm pleased to make a few remarks in relation to the comments from our colleague from Kenora-Rainy River.

I think it's quite clear that there's agreement on all sides of the House that what happened at Ornge was unacceptable and better oversight is needed. The minister has made this comment many, many times, and in fact she has done some very important work and made many positive changes. There's a new performance agreement, new procedures and policies, a quality improvement plan, a new board and a new CEO.

What we need in this bill is to ensure that Ornge never happens again. It is modelled on the Public Hospitals Act. That's an act that has served the people of Ontario very well in terms of public safety. I never heard any objections to the provisions within that bill.

We've had something like 16 hours of debate at this point, and really, I'm not hearing anything new. I think it's clearly time to get to committee. One of the remarks that I get from my constituents when they actually watch the proceedings of this House is about the repetition, the redundancies, what they perceive as a complete waste of time. Those are the sorts of comments I get.

It's clear that this bill needs to go to committee. We're very anxious to hear the good ideas from all sides of the House, to debate them in committee and to move forward. This kind of delay is not allowing us to proceed in a timely fashion, so I'm calling on the opposition parties to move on and take this particular bill to committee for appropriate debate. It's possible that there are some good ideas that the opposition wants to bring forward, though I'm beginning to wonder about that, hearing what I'm hearing—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Order.

The member for Kenora-Rainy River has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I want to thank the members who stood up and commented on some of my comments and some of the views that I brought to this debate.

One of the things that I heard from a number of speakers is that there are a lot of deficiencies in this bill and we really can do better. We really can bring something forward that would help. My seatmate mentioned that just having the Ombudsman of Ontario look after Ornge would be a huge help, because the Ombudsman is somebody who is known across the province, someone who's trusted and someone who has done a lot of great work since he has come to office.

I really do believe that we have a lot of good ideas about how we can improve this bill and this legislation going forward. I think there are a lot of great ideas in this House from MPPs, and I think that there are a lot of great ideas across the province.

People wake up, they listen to the news, they read the newspaper, and they get upset. People are really upset that so much money can be wasted when there's so much need.

Certainly, if you look at my riding alone, there is a tremendous amount of need, whether it's bringing down hydro bills or—I talked about the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre in Ignace. They need some assistance. The municipalities need assistance with their MPAC bills.

People have some good ideas. Let's bring it to committee; let's hear from people.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Speak from the heart.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'll speak with my heart, yes.

This is a very important issue across the province and especially in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, Madam Speaker. The operations of our provincial air ambulance system regularly impact the health and safety of Ontario residents. As such, fixing the broken structure at Ornge and instituting a reliable practice of transparency and accountability is one of the most important issues that we can address here in the Legislature.

Unfortunately, with the way this government has handled this important issue so far, it appears that the government is less concerned about the actual health and safety of the residents of Ontario and more concerned about the health and safety of its seats in this Legislature.

I want to commend the members on this side of the House, like my colleague the member for Whitby-Oshawa and my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora, for their tireless work to get to the bottom of the fiasco otherwise known as Ornge. They have repeatedly demanded in this Legislature that this government get to work and make real changes to the dysfunctional operational structure at Ornge.

Bill 11 should have been an example of how this government and Deputy Premier would demonstrate that in fact this new government has learned from its mistakes and is ready to take the advice of this Legislature and act in a meaningful way. However, this is not the case.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Madam Speaker, I see that the members are quite motivated and quite interested in my speech.

Rather, this bill is a copy of the hastily cobbled-together document that the Minister of Health tried to rush through this Legislature in the aftermath of the Ornge scandal.

In fact, just a few minutes ago, we heard one of the Liberal members say, "Hurry up. Get this passed. Let's

move on. We don't want to hear debate"—taking away our democratic right, and I know the Minister of the Environment wouldn't want to see that. He has been here for too many years and done too good a job here, representing his constituents, to want to see that happen. I'm sure the Attorney General feels the same way.

When it was Bill 50, Madam Speaker, it was considered nothing more than a tool for the Minister of Health and the ministry itself to gain political cover from their failure to do their job and to provide oversight of Ornge; as Bill 11, it's more of the same. To date, we have learned quite a bit more about the things that the administration at Ornge were doing.

The public accounts committee has done an excellent job of shining a light on the sort of wild mismanagement that was going on at Ornge under this minister's watch and this government's watch. However, we still don't know the full extent of the waste at Ornge because this government and this minister have repeatedly refused to strike a select committee and they have been unwilling to open the agency up to a full and transparent review, as has been called for many times in this House by members of both opposition parties. That is why it is more than passing strange that this piece of legislation, which the government claims will cure all the ills at Ornge, was put together and tabled in this Legislature without first hearing from all the witnesses at the committee or having a fully formed understanding of what was going on at the agency.

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This government, Madam Speaker, continues to claim two things, as they do with most of the scandals that have occurred on their watch. They continue to plead that there was nothing they could have done to stop what was happening at Ornge, and, two, they claim that since the Liberal government handed over the operation of the province's entire air ambulance service to Ornge, the Minister of Health has been powerless to intervene and stop this rogue agency from doing just about anything they wanted.

This assertion, of course, is completely incorrect and factually incorrect. The Minister of Health has always held the authority to intervene at Ornge under the original performance agreement, as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act. As has been pointed out by my colleagues in this Legislature, article 15 of the original performance agreement between Ornge and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care gives the minister the powers of this intervention, and it always has.

Madam Speaker, the fact is that almost as soon as Ornge was created, it started to drift off course, and, inconceivably, the Minister of Health and the ministry were asleep at the wheel. We are here today because this government got caught not paying attention to what was happening right under their nose, on their watch, and now they are working overtime at damage control.

Going all the way back to 2005, eight years ago, the Auditor General, a man we all know and revere and look to for nonpartisan analysis, recommended that this min-

istry conduct unannounced reviews of this agency. Let me reiterate: That was eight years ago. Red flags were raised by the Auditor General, who thought it was in the best interests of the health and safety of Ontario residents that unannounced checks be conducted at Ornge. And despite the fact that the ministry actually gave Ornge 90 days' notice to clean up its act before it conducted spot checks, the ministry still found that about one third of the aircraft were not properly stocked and equipment was not properly maintained.

After the story behind the gross misconduct at Ornge made it into the media, we learned that the agency had purchased helicopters that were essentially useless for patient transfer. Unbelievably, these multi-million-dollar helicopters were too small inside to allow emergency response personnel to perform the most basic of life-saving procedures. What a gross oversight. How that sort of mistake could be missed by the people at Ornge and the Ministry of Health—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: What about the \$6-million kickback?

Mr. Robert Bailey: That's right. It's just mind-boggling. The member for Halton reminds me about the alleged kickbacks to AgustaWestland. For \$6 million they purchased two more helicopters that were needed, apparently—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: And maybe there's more than that we don't know about.

This sort of mistake is the very thing that leads to people mistrusting government and our important public service. And of course, Madam Speaker, it's very concerning for residents who live outside of the highly populated communities of the GTA, as emergency transfer to larger medical facilities is a reality of health care in rural Ontario for these people. My community of Sarnia-Lambton is one of those places that must rely on Ornge air ambulance service for a number of reasons.

The scandal at Ornge is far from the first issue that people in my community have dealt with this year. In fact, in March 2011, almost a year before this whole scandal at Ornge broke, I wrote the Minister of Health asking that her ministry review the patient transfer procedures in the province, especially when air transport is required. In my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, there have been a number of poorly executed transfers and missed opportunities to provide the sort of care that we'd all want for ourselves or any of our loved ones. However, unfortunately, the ministry and the Minister of Health have sat on their hands rather than look into the concerns that were raised. Again, this is representative of how this minister and ministry have handled concerns for several years. In fact, I didn't hear anything from the minister's office until more than a year later, after the Ornge scandal broke, when my office again tried to bring forth the issue of patient transfer in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton. This time, the minister's staff made a show of looking into these issues. Frankly, the whole experience has left myself and my staff and the residents of Sarnia-

Lambton very concerned about the Ministry of Health and the way it has handled its operations.

Madam Speaker, I had hoped that after the many hours of debate that we have had in this House and the hundreds of hours of committee hearings that have been conducted into Ornge, this government would have actually tabled legislation that would create a process to ensure this sort of fiasco would not happen again. Bill 11, however, is not that piece of legislation. There's nothing substantive in the legislation. Even to the casual observer, this bill appears to be nothing more than a means of providing cover for the last eight years of a failed Liberal government that has failed to maintain proper oversight. Despite the recommendations of the members of this Legislature that the ministry personally maintain extensive oversight of Ornge, this legislation maintains the same failed structure that got us in the mess in the first place.

Moreover, Bill 11 does nothing to strengthen whistleblower protection for those front-line health care workers who are tired of being treated as an afterthought by the administration. Unfortunately, what the minister has prescribed as whistle-blower protection is laughable, and employees are only protected if they report to the administration at Ornge, the very same people they may be blowing the whistle on in the first place. This is like having the fox guard the henhouse.

There's nothing of substance in Bill 11 that will prevent what took place at Ornge from happening at Ornge again. The only way to ensure that is to have the Minister of Health and the Ministry of Health finally take responsibility for this oversight.

Madam Speaker, this minister and this government owe it to the people of Ontario to finally stand up and do what is right: Put in place real reforms that will prevent this type of reckless behaviour at Ornge or any other provincial agency.

I'd like to thank the members of the House for listening so intently to my speech, and at this time I look forward to the rest of the debate and a number of comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, a point that was raised by the recent speaker and also by my colleague from Kenora-Rainy River was the issue of whistle-blower protection. I agree with the member that there is a gaping hole in this legislation when it comes to whistle-blower protection, because one of the key issues is that, as previously indicated, the way it's framed currently is that the whistle-blower has to report to the administrators of Ornge itself.

Now, when we look at some of the best oversight that has gone on in this province, much of that has been because there are conscientious workers, people who are in a particular agency or a particular industry who notice that something wrong is going on and raise that concern. So there is great merit and great benefit in whistle-blower protection. We've seen time and time again that some-

times what someone can see on the front line, on the ground in a particular agency, is the best vantage point to find a problem. If we don't protect those people and don't support them and encourage them to come forward—they're actually acting as conscientious, civic-minded folks who see a problem in their agency and want it to be fixed, because they want the betterment of their agency but also the betterment of the community they live in.

Many of the folks who came forward with respect to Ornge's problems were people who cared about Ontario, cared about health care, cared about the well-being of fellow members of their community and wanted something to change and improve. The fact that they're not protected is a big fault of ours. We have to ensure that all whistle-blowers are protected, not just at Ornge but across the province at any agency that receives public funding. They should be supported and encouraged to come forward, find any problems and any faults and express those. I support my friend's comments with respect to that issue, and I think it's an important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You know, the government keeps on talking: "Let's get on with this. Let's pass this bill. Let's get it into committee." We in the opposition are somewhat suspect of that line of questioning, because this is the same bill that was introduced in front of the House prior to its being prorogued. They had an opportunity in the 127 days, was it, of prorogation? They had an opportunity—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: One hundred and eighty days, you say? Whatever. A long prorogation—118 days, 127 days?

This bill could have been changed. It could have been adjusted with all the comments we made prior to being prorogued, and yet it wasn't. Not one comma was changed; not one word was changed. When the government says, "Let's get it into committee and talk about the changes," we're a little suspicious that maybe there won't be any changes. Maybe you'll use your majority in the committee, which you don't have in the House, to make sure there are no changes to this bill. So it would be a little suspicious.

Now, if you were to guarantee us that there were some amendments to be made—if you make the proper amendments to this bill, we could even support it. And why do you want to move on, anyway? Look at the things that are on the order paper. The Great Lakes Protection Act—that's not going to solve the unemployment problem in Ontario, as important as it might be for the Great Lakes. What about the non-profit housing corporation act? It's not going to solve the economic issues that are facing Ontario. It might be very important for the non-profit housing units, but it's not going to do anything substantive for the economy of Ontario.

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What about the employment standards amendment? Now there's a good one. That's going to increase red tape

for all the businesses in Ontario. Holding that one up in the House has a real purpose: It makes business easier in Ontario without the red tape that bill's going to create, and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Further comments and questions?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, let's get down to brass tacks. This bill has been given 15 hours of debate in this House—15 hours of debate. As Hazel McCallion so well put it at the committee level, let's talk about the real issues that Ontarians are interested in. Let's deal with all of the employment situations that you talked about etc. Why are you holding this bill up?

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm obviously touching a raw nerve, because they can't stop from shouting—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would just remind everyone that questions and comments are to be directed according to the speech just heard, so I'd ask you to frame your comments in that context.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much for your intervention, Speaker.

They talked about the whistle-blower-protection aspects of this bill, and I would just ask the members to take a look at section 7.7, which clearly states that "no person shall retaliate against another person, whether by action or omission, or threaten to do so because,

"(a) anything has been disclosed to an inspector, investigator or special investigator in connection with a designated air ambulance service provider...."

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: There are consequences. This is a good piece of legislation. It may need some more work, and we all know in this House that where the work really gets done on a bill and deals with all the specific aspects of a bill is in committee. Let's get the bill to committee. After 15 hours of debate in this House, let's talk about some of the other issues that are affecting Ontarians on a day-to-day basis, and let's get on with it. This is a good bill that will solve a lot of the situations that have previously arisen—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I've only been here a year and a half, but I have to say that the member from Sarnia-Lambton has so eloquently put forth his argument, you would have to go back to the days of Sir John A. and such great orators to actually appreciate the quality of what Mr. Bailey has done here regarding Bill 11. I'm just proud of the fact that I'm a member of the PC Party, which the member from Sarnia-Lambton is a part of as well.

Again, we're hearing this afternoon that this government wants to hurry up the process of getting Bill 11 into committee, and as I stated yesterday, we are looking forward to this bill getting to committee, but more importantly, this is about democracy. This is about the expression and freedoms that we as Ontarians and Canadians have come to know and love, and when this

government wants to stymie that and hinder the process, it's a little disheartening to myself, because when you sift through, this is what this government has done the last nine years: They've bullied, they've pushed forward an agenda that the people of Ontario do not want to have, and I think it's a shame that we don't get to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the member to refer to the speech that was given and keep his comments consistent with those.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I just want to congratulate the member from Sarnia-Lambton for doing a fine job.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Sarnia-Lambton has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I would like to thank the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton; the member from Halton; the Attorney General, of course, for his fine remarks; and the member from Northumberland-Quinte. I think he may have had a tendency to gild the lily a bit there. I know that was a great speech, well delivered, but I don't know whether it was quite the equivalency of Sir John A. Macdonald—I wouldn't want to say that.

What I will say is that they've elucidated about the bill. We feel that the air Ornge scandal is a textbook example of why people are cynical about politics, politicians and bureaucrats, and the role of the private sector in trying to deliver this health care. This is one file where we've seen how a well-intentioned plan to divest delivery of essential health care services to an external, non-profit health care agency resulted in the waste of millions and millions of scarce health care dollars, put patients at risk, compromised the ability of dedicated health care providers to provide that service and may have, I say, contributed even to the deaths of some patients. That's a matter that still has to be decided upon.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, it is an opportunity here to point out what we feel are the shortcomings of that bill. After months and months of hearings and witnesses and thousands of pages of documentary evidence, we still don't have the bottom line in this case here. We think that the structure at Ornge itself is dysfunctional, and it was right from the start. It has not met the goals that were set for it. They've got some great staff who are trying their best to do their job, the front-line workers, and they've been let down by the minister, the minister's staff and the government, trying to—I don't want to use the word "cover-up"; I can't use that word—but anyway, the failure of this government to come clean on this and to tell us what we need to know to move forward so that Ornges can't happen in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: As the Attorney General mentioned, this bill has been debated for 15 hours. Again, the Attorney General is a Liberal, and it's not entirely accurate because this bill was debated in the first session of the 40th Parliament as well. I'm not sure how many

hours it had there, but I think it had a substantive number of hours there as well. It was reintroduced after prorogation and the speech from the throne.

We got into the second session of the 40th Parliament, and this bill was reintroduced, and it was reintroduced exactly the same way it was in the first session. All of the concerns that were expressed by the opposition and the third party were totally ignored. The whistle-blower protection, which is no protection at all, was ignored. The only way you can have whistle-blower protection for someone is to work it through the Ombudsman, who has the power to follow up and protect people. One of the pilots for Ornge had some concerns and expressed those concerns. He was here at a committee meeting; he expressed his concerns to the committee on Thursday and he was laid off on Monday for no apparent reason. They had a bunch of trumped-up reasons, but he was laid off four days after he made testimony in front of a committee here.

There is absolutely no protection for whistle-blowers, and from what we've seen, the government has no interest in putting any protection for whistle-blowers in this act, and yet we pointed that out prior to being prorogued. The government did absolutely nothing about that very serious part of this bill.

Now, we could pass this bill, or it could go down to defeat and things in Ontario would not change. There's nothing in this bill that allows the minister to do anything that she can't do now. This is a piece of fluff legislation which covers up some of the things that happened in the Ornge fiasco. This bill doesn't change any of those things. The same things could happen again even with this legislation in place. If the government doesn't want to continue to debate this bill, it has the option of not calling the bill.

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The government does call this legislation. If you don't want to debate this bill anymore, if you want to debate some of the other tremendously important bills before the House—I say that sarcastically, and I apologize; sarcasm isn't always a very enviable trait. But it's frustrating sitting in the opposition benches watching unemployment in Ontario go into its 75th month as being higher than the provincial average. It's frustrating in watching the job loss again last month, when over 50,000 jobs disappeared in Ontario, watching companies move out of Ontario to other jurisdictions, mostly right-to-work jurisdictions. It's frustrating sitting here and watching the government do absolutely nothing concerning any issue that those businesses and companies have to try and make it even a little bit better.

This government has nothing. They have five or six bills in front of the Legislature. None of them deal with an economic issue. None of them deal with unemployment. None of them deal in areas that would help businesses do better in Ontario or even consider moving to Ontario. None of them would have any influence on any of those. Some of them have some social merit, but none of them are going to make any economic difference to

the province of Ontario, and that is a great shame, because Ontario is a great province. In order to remain that great province, it needs to have growth in jobs, not the demise of jobs, but growth in jobs, and that's not happening in Ontario today.

As I say, this is the second time this bill has come before the House. It's exactly the same bill as it was before. You know, there are some substantive amendments that could be introduced for this bill, such as the whistle-blower protection. And if the whistle-blower protection was enhanced and put into place, I think some of the opposition members could start to support this legislation.

It would also be a tremendous strengthening of the bill if the Ombudsman was given the authority to investigate Ornge or any of the issues that were to occur at Ornge now or in the future. The Ombudsman is someone who is appointed by the officers of the government—the three party officers—and the Ombudsman is someone who is respected throughout the House. When he did an investigation, the House would accept that as being a good investigation and one based on fact. So if that were put in as an amendment, it would make this a better piece of legislation.

If this bill also included some authority for the Minister of Health to restructure Ornge to ensure that direct accountability to the Minister of Health—this organization does not have any responsibility to anyone in government, other than to operate an air ambulance service. When they were operating, they were operating five or six different private companies along with one public company, the air ambulance service. They were transferring money between those two companies being investigated by the OPP right now. The person in the Italian company they bought the helicopters from has been arrested for fraud in Italy. There are huge questions around that kind of deal. There was a \$6-million kickback. There's a question as to where that kickback went, as to whether it went to the public company or whether it went to a private company. If it went to a private company, it would be a *prima facie* case of fraud.

All of those things could still happen if we passed this bill. They couldn't happen, or it would be very much more difficult for them to happen, if this bill contained some authority that there was oversight of the Ornge organization by the Ministry of Health.

Another amendment might be the incorporation of specific accountability and performance measurements into the performance agreement. Again, there are some generalities. There's nothing specific. It's the same thing as happened under the old plan. There was a clause that said that we will protect whistle-blowers, but there were no consequences. If there was a reaction taken by the company to a whistle-blower, if the whistle-blower didn't get the proper hours in a week, if his or her working conditions were changed, there were no consequences to the company for any of those actions. A whistle-blower should be treated fairly, and if he or she is not treated fairly, there are no consequences to the company or the

officers of that company and the Minister of Health now or under this bill, if it were to be passed. It has no change. There's no difference. There are no teeth to the bill, and that's a shame.

We have an opportunity to do something to make this air ambulance service better for the people who work at Ornge, better for the people of Ontario who need this service desperately. We're letting that opportunity slip through our fingers because the government is failing to listen to people in the opposition. I have no great knowledge of the air ambulance business, but there are people in my community who have talked to me about it who do have knowledge of it, and they have passed this on to other members of our caucus: This is knowledge coming to the government, and you shouldn't be ignoring this. You have an opportunity to make this a better piece of legislation, and you shouldn't allow that opportunity to pass by.

The most important thing is requiring the direct oversight of Ornge air ambulance. All agencies, boards and commissions that operate in Ontario require direct oversight by this House. If you ignore that direct oversight, you do so at your peril.

Hazel McCallion was at a committee the other day in this House—two weeks ago next Thursday—and she said to keep an eye on the agencies, because if you don't keep an eye on the agencies, they'll bring down a government every time. She was absolutely right.

Ornge is a huge problem for this government, and it's because you didn't have any direct oversight over it—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to stand in this House and not so much an honour to talk about Ornge.

I'd like to comment on some of the member from Halton's remarks. I agree with a lot of his remarks. A lot of his remarks were very well thought out.

The one thing that he brought forward was, despite this being the second coming of this bill—

Interjection: It's a rerun.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a rerun. It hasn't changed, even though there was lots of time in between for the government to make some reflections and say, "How can we ensure that this bill will actually go more speedily through the House—because when we debated last time, some good things were brought up." They didn't take that opportunity, Madam Speaker, and you kind of wonder why. It would have made sense.

Proroguing the House didn't do any Ontarians—oh, no, it did. It did the Liberal Party some good, but it didn't do any other Ontarians any real benefit.

They could have taken that opportunity to say, "Let's make this bill a bit more substantive," and then maybe this debate would have been done already. But they didn't take that opportunity, and the member from Halton pointed that out.

Another issue that he pointed out—and in this corner we really do agree, and we don't often agree with the

Conservative Party—on this one, there should be whistle-blower protection through the Ombudsman. The Attorney General, a while ago, brought up, “Well, there are special investigators.” How do you find them at an Ornge base somewhere up north? How do you find the special investigator? You can find the Ombudsman a lot quicker because you can find him in the phone book.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oakville.

Mr. Daniel Flynn: I think there's agreement that has been stated on all sides of the House that what happened at Ornge was something that shouldn't have happened.

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I think when you're approaching the provision of any government service at any level, you decide on the way that's going to be provided. You can provide it yourself—you can provide direct provision from the province in this—or you can send it out to any agency. In this case, Ornge was set up in a way—and I think anybody that said that what happened at Ornge was acceptable, I would not share that opinion with them.

What happened at Ornge is that someone betrayed a trust that the government had placed with them. I think it's correct that the level of oversight was not what it should have been, and it should be improved.

I think what the speaker said is that some changes need to be made. I think the Minister of Health has laid the groundwork for those changes and has asked that the House debate this bill, and obviously has asked that the House, after debating the bill, move this bill on to committee so that any amendments, any positive changes, that could be made to the bill can be debated at committee, and the bill can be enhanced.

I think this bill represents one of the final changes that are needed at Ornge. I think some of the changes that have been put in place, including things like whistle-blower protection, including things like a patient advocate—they've changed the interiors on the helicopters; they've expanded service in Thunder Bay; dedicated patient flight service in northern Ontario; and finally, they have a quality improvement plan.

It sounds like the sorts of things that would be done in any organization that had gone through what Ornge has gone through have been done. I believe the organization is well into a new chapter. It's on the right path forward.

We've debated this bill for going on 16 hours. If it needs more, it's going to get more, but I look forward to the time when it's sent off to committee and all parties can bring their amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Wow, I'm just astounded here. First, we have the member from Sarnia–Lambton with his great oral skills. Now we have the member from Halton, and how he actually points out some very important facts about what is wrong with Bill 11. We almost had the member from Oakville make a formal apology there. We'll have to check Hansard.

But if we would actually just have the Liberal Party make a formal apology, particularly from the Minister of Health—and letting Ornge get out of hand as it has, such that we're here debating Bill 11 and some of the toothless legislation that has been brought forward to us again.

The member from Halton makes a very good point in the fact that this is an ongoing situation. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane made a very good point as well. We don't always necessarily agree with each other, but we all can agree when something has gone wrong. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane pointed out nicely that what we're doing here is to try and ensure that Ontarians receive the best health care possible. The member from Halton, I think, deserves a lot of credit in standing up and serving his riding fantastically, to make sure that the people from Halton are going to get the health care that they need, should they ever happen to use Ornge.

The people from Halton can rest assured that Mr. Chudleigh here is doing a fantastic job at Queen's Park, bringing forth issues that are going to make a big difference in their lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

M. Jagmeet Singh: Je suis d'accord avec le député. Il a dit que le gouvernement n'a rien changé dans ce projet de loi. Nous avons demandé quelque chose; nous avons demandé quelque chose comme la surveillance de l'ombudsman. Nous avons demandé quelque chose, mais je demande pourquoi le gouvernement n'a rien fait. Ils n'ont pas ajouté des idées ou nos suggestions.

I ask this government why they haven't acted on the ideas that we've presented. The member made a great point that there were a number of ideas that we've suggested, a number of ideas that we've raised. There has been a big gap between the initial iteration of this bill and the reiteration of this bill, yet none of these suggestions that we've made, like Ombudsman oversight, like stronger whistle-blower protection, like bringing this Ornge agency before Government Agencies—these suggestions haven't been implemented and haven't been taken into consideration. Why not? There is no reason, given the time between the first bill and the second bill, that some of these great suggestions haven't been implemented.

I have to give credit. I strongly respect and give a lot of credit to my colleague from—where is he from?

Interjection: Halton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Halton?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Oakville.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My apologies. The member from Oakville stood up and took some responsibility. He said there could have been better oversight. I commend the member for saying that. I think it takes a lot of courage to get up and say the right thing, that the government could have done more work. I think there's nothing wrong with doing that. If I am ever in the position of the government and I make a mistake, I think it's the right thing to do to get up and say, “Listen, we made a mistake. We could do

better.” There’s actually nothing wrong with that. I think that would work towards creating a better sense of collegiality in this room, when we could all admit our mistakes and work towards making them better and improving them. I salute the member for saying that and I agree with his suggestion that there are some things that should have been added in this bill that haven’t been added.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Halton has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I appreciate the comments made by the members. It’s interesting that the members who made comments picked out the same essential points and emphasis that I made in my brief comments.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about how there were no amendments made to the bill, which I find—if you’re going to reintroduce something after three or four months, why wouldn’t you take the time to redraft the bill and incorporate some of the things that would ensure its passage through this House? It just makes common sense. If the bill is truly important to the government, these amendments to the bill would make the bill stronger. It would make the bill better. It would not dilute the bill one iota. Why wouldn’t the government take that advice and do it?

The member for Oakville talked about the oversight and the breaking of the trust that the government gave to this organization. It wasn’t what I’d refer to as a mea culpa, but it did approach the fact that, yes, there were some problems. When you have some problems, it’s up to this House, the entire Legislature, to fix it. The government has brought back a bill, again, without any substantive amendments from the original version. It had the opportunity and it didn’t take that opportunity. It was an opportunity lost. That’s too bad.

The member for Northumberland–Quinte West also talked about the lack of trust.

There’s the old story from the 1950s when they were building the New York thruway. There’s a rumour that the New York thruway was built 12 inches too narrow, so the contractor got to save 12 inches of cement for the concrete for the entire length of the New York thruway, and that amounted to a lot of money. That was a lack of trust. That was a lack of oversight by the New York government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I’m pleased to rise again to speak to Bill 11, the Ambulance Amendment Act. Normally you can’t speak twice, but obviously last year I rose in the Legislature to speak to this same legislation, which at that time was called Bill 50. I raised a number of concerns with the legislation, as did my colleagues. I think it’s important that we remember why the people of Ontario sent us here and why we spend hours in this Legislature debating legislation. It’s our job as members of Parliament to point out weaknesses in the bills that are brought forward and to point out where the legislation doesn’t reach its intended goals. But it’s also our job as

members of Parliament to listen to that debate. It’s the job of government members in particular to act on the concerns raised in the Legislature by making the legislation better and to ensure it works for the people of Ontario.

The government talks about consulting and working together, but the proof is in their actions. In October when the Premier prorogued this Legislature, all the legislation, including Bill 50, died on the order paper. As you know, Madam Speaker, we were disappointed that the government chose to delay all the work of the province while they held a leadership race. We are disappointed that they chose not to debate bills like this one and they chose to shut down the committees that were investigating Ornge, leaving five committee requests for information outstanding and the evidence by a number of key witnesses yet to be heard.

But I’m even more disappointed that when they reintroduced the legislation like this act, they ignored all the concerns that had been raised by the opposition parties.

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This morning, as we began debate on the Local Food Act, we were facing the same situation: After four months of the Legislature being prorogued, after all the comments from agriculture organizations and local food groups, that act missed many essential issues. After a commitment by the now-Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food to introduce a “strengthened food act,” the government introduced the same weak food act as last fall. Then they introduced the same weak ambulance act, which will still fail to address the challenges at Ornge air ambulance. This is not a real attempt to fix the problems with Ontario’s air ambulance organization or to add better oversight; it is an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister has had the power to hold Ornge and its board accountable from the very beginning.

There were many signs that something was wrong at Ornge. The ministry was informed about the many corporations that were being created. The ministry should have realized that something wasn’t right when Dr. Mazza disappeared off the sunshine list—and we later discovered his excessive salary. The ministry should have realized that something wasn’t right at an organization where they were paying for designer motorcycles to sit in the front lobby and paying expenses for glamorous trips to Florida, South America and Europe.

Through the work of the public accounts committee, it has come out that there were communications with the government and there were warning signs, but they were ignored. No one took responsibility; no one bothered to look up at the many signs that something was going wrong. The people of Ontario need to know that they have an air ambulance service that they can count on. We all hope that our loved ones never need to use one, but if they need it, it must be there.

I heard from constituents in my riding whose granddaughter, Jamie Lynn, was one of the unfortunate ones that needed the air ambulance. She was six years old.

Jamie Lynn collapsed at home on June 30, 2011, and was rushed to Windsor Regional Hospital by ambulance. There, the family was told that she needed to be transferred to London or Toronto, but they waited for hours for the air ambulance that didn't come, and she was eventually transferred by car to Detroit. There, she was diagnosed with meningitis, but it was too late.

Jamie's grandparents want to ensure that no family goes through what they went through. They want to ensure that Ontario has an air ambulance system that works. For that to happen, we need to ensure that if there is a problem, employees at Ornge can alert us to those issues. Without whistle-blowers, we might never have discovered that Ornge had purchased helicopters which didn't have enough room for paramedics to perform their jobs properly.

This legislation addresses whistle-blowers, but it fails to provide across-the-board protection for them. In fact, it limits which individuals are protected and who can approach them with information. Without whistle-blowers, we might never have learned about the money that went to expenses and excessive salaries instead of health care. Without them, we might not have discovered that Ornge purchased 12 helicopters and 10 airplanes even though their own analysis said that three helicopters and four airplanes were all they needed at the time. Without whistle-blowers, we might not have learned about the mystery payments of millions of dollars that the manufacturer paid to companies related to Ornge.

I want to commend those people who were brave enough to come forward to raise their concerns; those who were brave enough to risk their jobs to say that things weren't right. If there are problems in the future, whether the issues are related to money mismanagement or operational issues that put lives at risk, we need those whistle-blowers to come forward, but this bill fails to provide the protection to ensure that they will feel safe in doing so.

But solving the problems at Ornge takes more than whistle-blowers. It takes proper oversight, like a ministry, a Minister of Health and a government who are accountable and responsible. The many problems at Ornge have demonstrated that we don't currently have that. When my colleague the member from Newmarket-Aurora raised questions in the Legislature, the Minister of Health defended Ornge. When it became clear that there were significant problems at Ornge—from finances to aircraft to operations—the Minister of Health failed to take any responsibility. The government failed to take responsibility or hold the minister accountable. In fact, after everything had happened at Ornge, the new Premier chose to promote the Minister of Health to Deputy Premier. What message does that send?

The actions that were taken at Ornge are the subject of an OPP investigation. The coroner launched an inquest to look into a number of deaths related to Ornge. These are serious problems with serious consequences, and yet, when employees raised the concerns and a member of the Legislature questioned the Minister of Health, concerns

were simply ignored. There was a fundamental problem with the government's oversight of Ornge, but it's not one that this bill will address. For instance, in this bill, the government could have, and should have, given the Ombudsman oversight of Ornge to ensure that the minister was doing her job, that limited health care dollars were not wasted and that Ontarians had an air ambulance system they could depend on.

It's not just the opposition parties that were asking for this oversight. In a letter to the Minister of Health, the Ombudsman said: "While moving in the right direction, measures such as the establishment of an Ornge patient advocate and Bill 11's creation of a new bureaucracy of 'special investigators' are insufficient to provide much-needed scrutiny, and continue to shield Ornge from Ombudsman oversight. My office remains unable to address any individual or systemic issues involving Ornge."

"The Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario is a unique resource to support the Legislative Assembly in holding government accountable. It is there to allow the provincial Parliament to scrutinize government bodies. I cannot think of a more persuasive case for this than Ornge."

That's from the Ombudsman.

Over the last four months, why did no one in government take the time to amend the legislation to add this oversight? Why did they not take the time to strengthen the legislation to make it more effective?

The role that Ornge plays is essential. The service they provide is often literally life or death. The people of Ontario can't afford for the government to play games or put public relations first. I hope that this time the government is listening to the concerns the opposition is raising and will be taking steps to address them, to ensure we have legislation that provides proper accountability and oversight, legislation that ensures our limited health dollars are protected and that this essential life-saving service is available when it's needed.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me a few moments to put those words on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour today to comment on the comments of the member for Oxford. Although he is my uncle, I hope no one holds it against me.

But he did bring up some very good points, and he showed how close he is to his constituents. He brought up a case in his constituency of a family that was deeply impacted by a problem at Ornge. He focused a lot on whistle-blowers, and that's also a subject we focus on a lot—a subject I focus on a lot, about a case that's happening in my constituency. Maybe I learned from my uncle to be close to my constituents, because those are the people you're really working for.

One thing I think we also echo each other on is Ombudsman protection, because that's the one universal. I talk to my constituents, and who do you turn to when you have a problem, when you want something impartial? You look to the Ombudsman. He did a good job of bringing that forward. Once again, I fail to understand,

and I would like someone on the government side to say why they don't want Ombudsman oversight. What do you have against an impartial office looking over this issue? And not only this issue, the Ornge issue; what we're missing here is that there could be other Ornges—there will be—and we have to look at how we can fix it. Why don't we have Ombudsman oversight?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I think there's agreement on all sides of the House that what happened at Ornge was unacceptable and better oversight is needed, and the OPP is in there doing their investigation now.

But since that happened, there have been a lot of good things happening at Ornge. The minister has done very important work and made positive changes. There's a new performance agreement, new procedures and policies, a quality improvement plan, and a new board and CEO. We're going out to the head office tomorrow as part of the public accounts committee, but reports we've had over the last six months say that things are really improving. The front-line staff are doing a great job, and so is the administration.

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This bill represents the final stages needed to get Ornge properly set up. We've used almost 17 hours of debate for a bill that is very similar to one that was already seen by this Legislature last fall. We need to move forward with our work on this bill. It's time to send it to committee. Members of the opposition have said they see room for improvements in this bill, and that work needs to be done at committee. I'm calling on the opposition to allow this bill to proceed to committee so that we can have debate and discussion that will allow us to come forward with a piece of legislation that is strong and provides protection for the people of Ontario.

One of the things that was discussed, because this has been sort of an issue of—the right agreement is the right agreement. We had in front of us twice, and under oath, Carole McKeogh. She's the senior legal person for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. She wasn't involved in the original Ornge agreement. She was brought in as the person that advised us. At committee, twice, under oath, Carole McKeogh said this is what is required. It's like the Excellent Care for All Act. It's like the hospital agreement. So this agreement is the right agreement. Let's get it to committee, and let's do the work on it to get it passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to commend the member for Oxford for, once again, an excellent speech. It's the second time he has had to speak on this legislation because, of course, the government keeps telling us how important this legislation is, yet the rascals took off for four months, closed this place down, wouldn't let us—

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I guess it's unparliamentary if it upsets them, so I do apologize. You son of a guns, first

you buy an election, right? And then, for your own selfish reasons, because things are getting a little heated around here, you shut the place down. Now you expect us to reward bad behaviour by speeding up your bill. Well, frankly, folks, if this was so important—I think what it shows is that you brought back the same weak legislation you had before you prorogued last October 15.

The fact of the matter is, I'm a former Minister of Health. I know darn well that the existing law allowed Ms. Matthews, the Minister of Health, to do her job. She failed miserably in doing her job. She should have at least stepped down and gone to the penalty box to show that there was some remorse over there for wasting the taxpayers' money at eHealth, for the boondoggle you made of Ornge.

You know the one thing they've never explained, Madam Speaker? Why did you get rid of the ambulance service we had, which was run by the private sector? What deal did George Smitherman make now that he's in consulting? Is he actually working for some of these companies that benefitted? The fact of the matter is, you put thousands of pilots and people out of work and you've never explained it to the people of Ontario.

I can remember celebrating, as Minister of Health many, many years ago, the 15th anniversary of the helicopter service we had. Remember, we had Bandage 1 and Bandage 2, and the complaints in those days were far less. Those ambulances could actually land on the grass. They could land on gravel roads. Now we have to drive people to fancy airports in order to get them air-ambulance lifted. That's ridiculous. You've never explained to the people of Ontario why you screwed the system up in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member for Davenport.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Here's the voice of reason.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the Attorney General. I pretty much 100% disagree respectfully with my colleagues in the PC Party in general, in general. However, I absolutely respect their ability to participate in debate in this assembly. That's why we—

Interjection.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy that they have their right to debate and continue to debate. What I object to is a government that is going to scold us about our objectives here and about the pace at which things move here, because we know that we have a government that is dragging their feet, that shut down the Legislature. It's a broken record. We all know this. For months and months and months, this place was not open and the people's business could not be done. But it seems like a government in which, depending on the issue, things go at different paces. In my community in Toronto, people are feeling like a casino is being forced down their throats. A casino will be forced down the throats of people in this city because this government is pushing this issue. They know that there's a captive market in Toronto. They can create people with gambling addictions in our city.

There's a big market here, so they're pushing that. We've asked for a referendum on this issue, and the government—Kathleen Wynne as the new Premier has refused to give our city a referendum to make this decision.

But when it comes to this issue, the Premier in fact bragged that she was going to bring the Legislature back early. She brought it back, and then there's nothing to talk about. They've got this same tired bill that's not going to do anything. This is the government that's setting the agenda, and now they want to stand up and complain about the PC Party holding up the agenda. It's whatever works for this government.

At the same time, we're missing huge opportunities to actually take action. This government owes it to the people of Ontario to take action on the key things that matter. Unfortunately, we haven't heard very many of those in a very long time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oxford has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Timiskaming—Cochrane, Ottawa—Orléans, Simcoe—Grey and Davenport for their comments.

One of the things I keep hearing from the government side is that we've had considerable debate, and now this is going to go to committee and this is where you make changes. Madam Speaker, in the normal course of events that's what happened, but as I mentioned in my remarks, this is the second time we've been through this. We had all the debate. All the issues with this bill were put to the government, and we said, "This isn't going to work the way you're doing it. What you need to do is improve the bill." Now they're saying, "We're willing to improve it. Just send it to committee."

What did they do all the time they were unemployed and let go by the Premier while they were looking for—oh, they were looking for a leader; that's what they were doing. But they were not amending the bill to what they heard in the discussion. They then brought it back exactly the same. From that, I have to make the assumption that they wanted the bill to pass exactly the way it was there, that it's all window dressing. They're not about to change the bill when it goes to committee this time.

I just want to encourage them to make sure that with what everyone has been telling us, this bill does not do what they say they want done, which is that they want to have an accountable air ambulance service with accountable oversight. That will not be done unless they look a little further, do what the Ombudsman asks for and give the Ombudsman the power to have oversight of the air ambulance, so that when people do not get the service they want, they don't have to go directly to the minister. They can call the Ombudsman and say, "I think you should investigate. It's a government service, and we're not getting what the government says they're providing us."

I think that's what they need to do. So, from all this debate, the very least we can hope for is that they put in that the Ombudsman will have oversight to make sure the people of Ontario are protected with their ambulance service.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Armstrong assumes ballot item number 20 and Mr. Singh assumes ballot item number 25.

Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I was just wondering if any of the other parties want to join the debate, but I'm pleased to stand up here and join the debate of Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services.

For over a year—mostly the public out there that happens to be watching—we've seen on the news that Ontario's air ambulance service, or Ornge, has symbolized everything that's wrong with this McGuinty-Wynne government. It represents out-of-control spending, lack of safeguards to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are being spent wisely and what has turned out to be a virtual abdication of government oversight.

We have seen a supposed arm's-length agency of the government running amok, virtually unchecked by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. My colleague the member for Newmarket—Aurora has done an excellent job trying to get to the bottom of Ornge and making public the scandal that has existed. I quote his remarks on March 5: "The Ornge air ambulance scandal is a textbook example of why people are cynical about politics, about politicians, about bureaucrats and the role of the private sector in delivering public services."

Since the McGuinty government created Ornge, we've witnessed a consistent record of mismanagement and scandal. A lot has been said about the Auditor General here this afternoon—it goes as far back as 2005. The Auditor General was already documenting many of the problems which in the last year have dominated the newspapers and newscasts.

What started out as a reasonable plan to divest the delivery of an essential health care service—we don't know why the other service wasn't performing that well, but anyway they planned to divest it to an external, non-profit corporation, and it has turned out to be this government's worst nightmare.

1700

With the financial crisis which is facing Ontario, it's criminal, absolutely criminal, to see millions and millions of scarce health care dollars wasted, frittered, misappropriated, due in no small part to the fact that the minister was not providing proper oversight to Ornge. We all have cases in our ridings where we'd like to see our health care dollars spent better, but when we see the scandalous waste of millions of dollars from Ornge under the Ministry of Health, we all cringe and say, "How could this be?" when patient care has been compromised and the courageous efforts of the front-line health care professionals have been undermined by a flagrant lack of oversight and misuse of delegated authority. And it's those workers who were tipping us off about what was going on at Ornge. They were disgusted. They were there to provide quality care and save patients' lives. They

took it on as their responsibility, and they were the ones who kept pushing and pushing the ministry, and nobody was listening. The red flags were up.

What do we have? We have patients who have died as a result of this incompetence and lack of oversight. One of the most important issues that the Legislature can address is certainly the safety of all Ontarians and the ability of a government to deliver high-quality and safe air ambulance services.

In the Auditor General's report in 2005 on land ambulances, he recommended that the ministry conduct unannounced reviews to ensure consistent quality of service. However, the ministry's policy, then and now, is to provide advance notice of at least 90 days. So, despite the advance notice of 90 days, about one third of the services, including Ornge, did not pass their scheduled review the first time. Again, the Auditor General gave you tons of red flags. We have asked and asked to get to the bottom of Ornge, because there's a huge responsibility. We have, in this Legislature, to be responsible to the people of Ontario.

The Auditor General said, in the issues that were cited—we've heard about it in the news and during committee hearings—such things as aircraft being improperly stocked with medical supplies and equipment; medical oxygen equipment that was improperly maintained as well. We've heard tons about the inability in the space to perform CPR, which is a basic life-saving measure. How could you buy a helicopter in which you couldn't perform CPR? Again, who was watching the shop?

It has been brought up, and I'll bring it up again. Chris Mazza: How did they let a salary go of \$1.4 million per year, outrageous perks and expenses, money channelled into other companies in order to get around reporting requirements, the sunshine list?

We asked some pretty hard-hitting questions in question period last year before we prorogued and they tried to shut all the questioning and everything down so that we in opposition or the public couldn't ask any more questions and put pressure on the government. They kept saying, "We had no prior knowledge of this." Well, we have all spoken, pretty much. We are going to continue on this side until we have all spoken on this bill. We haven't heard the right answers back; that's why we keep speaking.

Anyway, there should have been consequences for the Minister of Health; instead, we see that she has been promoted to Deputy Premier. There were no consequences at all. She got a promotion—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Ridiculous.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes—for covering up what clearly has been proven: that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care knew about Ornge.

After all the days of committee hearings, dozens of witnesses, thousands of pages of documentary evidence proving for all to see that the fundamental structure of Ornge is flawed, it's dysfunctional, we're still seeing a serious flaw on the part of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to exercise oversight responsibilities.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's a little loud in here. I really can't hear the member. We've got people in her own caucus talking loud. For the amount of people in here, it certainly is loud; I can't believe it. So if we could cut it back a bit, I'd like to hear what the member has to say. Thank you.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for wanting to hear what I had to say. I appreciate that.

Bill 11, which we're debating here today, has been much touted by the minister as a panacea for all of the ills at Ornge; it's going to solve it all. But we can see that it's just a further attempt by this government to divert attention away from the failure of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for years. It's a lack of oversight for the bureaucrats who failed to clearly define their oversight responsibilities. As we've seen so many times before, it's another example of too little, too late. So, lots of bravado over there on the government side, but short on substance. It truly is, Bill 11. If shallow, high-sounding rhetoric were the key to successful government, Ontario would have a huge surplus, zero unemployment, brand new infrastructure and the best highway and health care systems in the world. We could probably throw in a cure for cancer over there, but unfortunately, that is no reflection on the reality of what goes on in this province.

The gross mismanagement of the Ornge file is merely symptomatic of so many other areas that this government has tainted with its misguided policies, and if there was any oversight at all—what we have in this bill is an attempt by the government to cobble together a piece of legislation. They had a long time between the first time they brought it in—then we prorogued, then they brought it back in again, but really, they have made it no better. The public accounts committee still hasn't completed all its work, so we haven't even gotten to the bottom of Ornge. We haven't heard from all the witnesses, but yet they're bringing in a piece of legislation—again, for the second time—that says it fixes all the problems at Ornge. There are still too, too many questions to be answered. We need to fully understand what happened at Ornge and the magnitude of how this scandal actually evolved so it's not repeated again.

If you could hopefully table responsible legislation—and I know that the ministers have been shouting that we can make amendments; well, we'll see if amendments actually get made, because really, why didn't you change the bill to make it stronger while you had kind of the time off to do that? You could have done it during prorogation and brought back a stronger bill.

The Auditor General, in 2012—I mentioned him in 2005, that this started—noted that Ornge wouldn't willingly provide his investigation with documents. Why couldn't the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care say, "Provide the documents"? They had to be accountable. Could you not have seen that, with all the complaints and the Auditor General's report starting, there was something wrong? People's lives were at risk, and this incompetence and scandal shouldn't go on.

When this bill would amend the Ambulance Act to allow providers of air ambulance services to be

“designated air ambulance service providers,” the cabinet would give the power to appoint provincial representatives to sit on boards of designated air ambulance providers, of which Ornge is one, and the bill would actually empower the minister to issue directives to designated air ambulance services—really, a lot of excitement in that bill.

The bill—I have just a short time left—would also permit cabinet to appoint special investigators to investigate a designated air ambulance service in various areas. I know my colleague on the NDP has mentioned that it's pretty hard to get special investigators up in northern Ontario when they need to investigate; that's why we've been calling for the Auditor General to have more oversight in this.

Finally, this bill would provide limited protection for whistle-blowers. It's been brought up: It may be better than it was, but it's still not what we need to protect the whistle-blowers. As I say, the staff that brought forward those documents certainly put their jobs on the line, and we didn't offer them enough protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: There was a comment made that, if anybody's listening outside TV land—is anybody listening? I know for a fact that in London—Fanshawe, Wayne and Netty are listening. They tune in every day to watch the Legislature, and I know that they're going to find that we're talking about Ornge and the scandal that happened at Ornge; they're going to be following it, and they're going to be listening very intently to what the Liberal bill is proposing and what the opposition is saying.

One of the things that we have found that there's a provision in this bill for is, it allows for the amendment of the accountability agreement, at any point, through regulation and without consultation. This is the first time that this has been done. When we have this particular concern, where an amendment can be made to the accountability agreement without it coming back to the House so that it can be discussed, to me that's another red flag, because this government failed in the first accountability agreement to properly enforce the tools that they had on the Ornge organization. Now, if we have this type of provision in here, where the government can just amend the accountability agreement without it coming back to the House, through regulation and without consultation, that's another recipe for unaccountability and a situation where a minister may not—well, you know what? They need to have the opposition's perspective. We give them a different perspective. It's not all sunshine and roses when we make a bill. We have criticisms of that bill. We have suggestions for that bill in order to make it better. Same thing when you're looking at an accountability agreement, where you're going to make an amendment to that; you may want to hear the opposition's feedback in order to make that a stronger amendment and an amendment that's accountable in that agreement. That way, you don't get the situation we

heard about Mr. Smitherman: “It was his original agreement and now we're going to make it better.” That agreement should have been ironclad from the beginning when you're talking about the public purse.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Just a few comments on the remarks made by the member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. It's a beautiful part of this country of ours.

As I was listening to the previous speakers, especially the member from Oxford, I didn't know about the relationship between the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane and the member from Oxford. I think it's wonderful that we have a relationship on both sides of the opposition there. I look forward to some more intermingling as we move along.

But just a brief remark on the comments by the member: Nobody is questioning that there was not enough supervision or whatever you want to call it, but we're at the stage now where we've had 17 hours. I won't even dare say that you folks have had enough, that I think we should send the bill to committee. They can have all the time in the world, but the longer we debate the same thing over and over again, the longer we delay the bill from going to committee and bringing it back.

I would suggest to the members of the opposition to prepare themselves a good number of amendments that would indeed make the bill much better when it comes back. We have already incorporated in the bill some good recommendations which, I have to say, the opposition tends to agree is an improvement. Well, if we want to see it better, then prepare some amendments, come along to the committee, let them be heard and then bring it back. This is all we want, and I hope that today we can accomplish this.

Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the member for her comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments. The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. It's wonderful to see such a steady man in the chair this afternoon here in the House.

It's a pleasure to have some comments on this, and I think it's important to start off first by saying the public interest is safeguarded through debate. That is the fundamental purpose and objective of this assembly and every assembly. The only way that we have, the only tool that we have, to safeguard the public interest is through debate. These comments from the government side that we should do away with debate—what they're in reality saying is, “Let's do away with the safeguards to the public interest.”

I think it's also important for everybody to recognize—I think Ornge demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt that there are some things that governments are just not capable or well suited to do. Ornge air ambulance is that. As the member from Simcoe already mentioned, up

until 2005 we had an air ambulance system that worked fine and worked efficiently. It was run by the private sector; government was not involved. We had no scandals. We had no misfortunes or terrible situations of people not being able to get to the hospital because of crews not being lined up or improper helicopters being purchased.

I think that is really what this government ought to recognize. In my view, this government should pull this bill off the table, recognize their total, complete and utter failure with Ornge, and say, "This is something beyond our abilities. Let's go back and put it the way it was before George Smitherman tinkered with it."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know there has been an awful lot said about Ornge. I want to put a very positive spin on this, and that is, I want to say something very positive about all the hard-working people that work at Ornge on a day-to-day basis.

I'll talk from personal experiences. I live within about one block of Kingston General Hospital. They have a helicopter pad just outside of Kingston General Hospital. On a daily basis, at least two Ornge helicopters come in that take people from wherever they are hurt in the province of Ontario, or from wherever they need to be transported from, right next to Kingston General Hospital. Many of these helicopters, either directly or indirectly, come from Moose Factory. You see, there has been this relationship developed over the last 300 years between Moose Factory and Kingston General Hospital whereby many patients that need the extra care that a tertiary care hospital can give them and that are in Moose Factory are helped at Kingston General Hospital. I have seen these helicopters land on a day-to-day basis at least two or three times a day. I've always been very pleasantly—not surprised, but I found that the care that these individuals that fly these helicopters, that look after these sometimes severely ill individuals in the helicopter and transfer them from the helicopter into the hospital—that that is done in a very professional fashion, and I think we should applaud those individuals.

That's really what this service is all about. It's all about the safety of the individuals that need to be transported to hospitals as quickly as possible. And that's why I say to the opposition: We've had enough debate. Let's get this bill to committee so that you can make your necessary amendments. It's a minority Parliament. You control the day. Let's get this on the road and get going.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has two minutes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are having a debate because we do care about the safety of the citizens of Ontario and we do care that the government is spending their money correctly and not having scandals like we've seen at Ornge, where actually people died from the mismanagement of the file.

Why do we have Ornge? That is the question. Was the government not able to provide adequate services before

for air ambulance? Did Ornge really have to be created, and did all those millions of dollars have to be wasted? No. And this bill does nothing substantive to change that. It's just a cover-up for the ministry's failure of leadership. It perpetuates the existing structure of air ambulance, and those great front-line workers that we all praise and that we are happy are there serving us are the ones that helped uncover all the scandals that were going on at Ornge. They did not want this system to occur. They saw that patients were compromised, that the whole air ambulance was being mishandled.

Does it talk about enough whistle-blower protection? This bill actually limits the scope of the whistle-blower protection to protect those front-line staff so they can tell the government, the ministry, when there are problems, when patients are compromised, when they are compromised. It does not provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers.

The legislation, we feel, needs to provide for a formal process through the Ombudsman that will ensure proper protection and follow-up. This bill is, as I said before, an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister had the power to hold Ornge and its board accountable from day one. She had the power to intervene at Ornge under the original Ornge performance agreement, as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act. But Bill 11, which we're debating here today, does not provide the oversight that's needed for the air ambulance, nor does it get to the bottom line of what that scandal is all involving.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you so very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 11. I'll just start off by once again by reminding people that Ornge demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt that the government is incompetent and incapable of providing some services. Before Ornge became structured in this province, we had private contractors providing air ambulance services to the people of Ontario, and they did it efficiently. They did it effectively. They did it without scandal. They did it without buying motorboats for Chris Mazza, or motorcycles. They did it without providing MBAs and executive MBAs at taxpayer expense. They did it efficiently, effectively and without tragic circumstances for the people of Ontario.

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This government ought to recognize the failings of Ornge and not window-dress it with Bill 11.

Speaker, two weeks ago I spoke in this House about the need for strengthening the Taxpayer Protection Act as well. When I raised the concerns that I've heard from citizens around the province about how they were being put out of business by the various Liberal and NDP coalition taxes—that mimosa coalition—it was laughed off by the government.

When I spoke about how a resident from the Attorney General's own riding called me because he couldn't work

in the winter because, with all the new taxes, he couldn't afford to heat his workshop, the Attorney General and the government just didn't seem to care about our constituents. It seems to me that's the Liberal government's approach when it comes to Ornge as well: a disregard for the people who are affected by their failed administration. If you're a patient of Ornge who requires CPR, you might just as well be disregarded or forgotten.

I'd like to quote from a Toronto Star story from last January regarding the safety issues with Ornge's new helicopters at the time. Dr. Bruce Sawadsky found that the helicopters' "cramped medical interiors are a 'high-risk environment.' [I]t is t[ro]ugh to do CPR. [I]t is h[ar]d to prop up a patient with difficulty breathing."

This wasn't the first time that this happened under the leadership of the Minister of Health and the member for London North Centre. This actually came up, and someone's life was put in jeopardy, in 2011.

I'd like to again quote from Mr. Donovan's story in the Star. There was an "incident in which pilots and paramedics on the new helicopter had to struggle to save a patient's life.

"A patient went into cardiac arrest mid-flight and the paramedics attempted cardiopulmonary resuscitation. However, they discovered they could not carry it out because the patient was pushed toward the chopper ceiling in mid-flight.

"Under tremendous pressure to save the patient's life' the crew figured out a way to provide the life-saving treatment."

Documents describing these problems were sent to Ornge head office and to the provincial Ministry of Health, but no action was taken.

Can you imagine being the crew of the helicopter, fulfilling your dream as a paramedic, saving people's lives, and having to deal with that from our province? Can you imagine having a loved one die due to incompetence like that?

Unfortunately, there are people who are victims of Ornge's mismanagement and the Liberal government's incompetence. Take, for example, Clyde Dearman. Last May, Clyde was supposed to celebrate his 50th wedding anniversary with his wife, Judy. Unfortunately, Judy had to wait eight hours for Ornge to send a helicopter from Barry's Bay to Ottawa. She was not shown the compassion or the care that she deserved and that ought to be expected.

Just a week prior to that, there was a horrific crash in Stouffville. Ornge didn't have enough crews to respond and there was another victim of their mismanagement: Richard Ribeiro, a married father of a young child, died of his injuries in hospital because he wasn't treated timely or professionally by Ornge.

When Richard and Judy fell victim to this mismanagement, the person at the helm wasn't Chris Mazza anymore. It was the Ministry of Health, the minister—the same minister today—who had oversight the entire and complete time.

What has been the minister's response to the mismanagement at Ornge? Well, at best, you might call it a shrug of the shoulders.

Speaker, there are lots of models the minister could have chosen to look at to reform Ontario's air ambulance service. She could have used the example found most often throughout the world, where air ambulances are provided privately, either through charity or at a profit. That is the norm in the world.

In Australia and New Zealand, for example, the second-largest bank there, Westpac Bank, provides air ambulance services while also bolstering its image as a charitable company. Can you imagine the scandal that Westpac would have endured if they didn't buy helicopters large enough for their patients, or how angry the people would be if there was an Australian Judy or a Kiwi Richard who perished due to Westpac's incompetence?

There is another model that the minister could have looked at: Scotland's model. Scotland is one of the few places that has a government-run air ambulance service. I went on the Scottish ambulance services website yesterday and saw a page called "Making a Complaint," which detailed the numerous ways and people to whom you could complain. You could complain to the ambulance service itself; you could complain to the National Health Service or to the Scottish Ombudsman. There was even a detailed way to go to mediation if you were not happy with the way your complaint was dealt with by the air ambulance service. Does Ornge have any of that? Does Bill 11 have any of that? The answer, Speaker, is no; none. That's what accountability and oversight is. That's a far cry from what we had or will have with Ornge under Bill 11 or without Bill 11.

I don't believe the minister looked at either of those models. Personally, I don't believe she looked at any model ever about air ambulance services. Instead, the government is telling the victims of Ornge, from all the taxpayers who have funded this fraud to the actual people who have lost their lives due to Ornge's mismanagement, that their concerns do not matter. Instead of fixing the problem, instead of fundamentally reforming the culture of fraud and the pathological bureaucracy that created this baneful entity, the Liberals have said that the status quo is the only way to go.

Bill 11 is giving ever more power to the Liberal government, but ever more power, also, to hide from accountability and scrutiny behind their unelected, unaccountable third party agencies. It's no way to fix the problem, Speaker.

We know how these agencies have turned out before. Chris Mazza was appointed. Considering how well that appointment did, I'm sure that it's a wonderful conciliation to those harmed by Ornge that the Liberal government will make even more appointments in the future.

I know that Bill 11 promises to address this lack of oversight, but we've heard those promises before, and it doesn't seem to me that the people who have contacted

me believe it either. After signing a petition to appoint an all-party select committee to investigate Ornge, Al from Brockville wrote me to say, "Fraud must be addressed, and those involved must be treated as the criminals they are." Or Rick from Toronto, who wrote me to say, "Think of all the work we could have accomplished building roads and bridges if the Liberal government did not waste billions on eHealth ... millions on gas plant cancellations" and millions more on Ornge, just to name a few. Dell from Merrickville wrote me that his concern isn't that Ornge is going to be fraudulent again, but instead that, "These suits and skirts at the new College of Trades will be just another Ornge boondoggle" in the making.

A common theme and thread has appeared constantly through this Liberal agenda, the McGuinty-Wynne agenda, and it's this: The minister will sit back and relax, fall asleep at the switch, create an agency to hide behind and enjoy sipping a mimosa and the parliamentary support from the NDP coalition partners who keep them there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm happy to respond, except I'm awaiting this bill proceeding to committee. I notice that the government has engaged in a debate. I notice that the third party has engaged in a debate from time to time on this bill and has brought forward some interesting suggestions, as have members of the government.

1730

What is clear here is that the speeches that are taking place amount to a filibuster in the House now. This bill should proceed to committee. At committee, people will have a chance to advance their thoughts there, and perhaps some amendments that they can put forward at that particular point in time. I think there will be probably an opportunity to hear people who would make presentations to the committee. This is appropriate. But it's clear what their strategy is. The government is proposing this bill. We did not expect that there was going to be a unanimous endorsement of it, by any means. But the Conservative Party is only interested in tying up the House, not proceeding with the bill, not proceeding with any legislation, because they have no interest in making the House work, unfortunately.

Now, that's different from what I saw from 1977 to 1981. There was a minority Parliament at that particular time. Mr. Davis happened to be the Premier of the province, and, yes, there were ideas that were advanced by the government of the day, Mr. Davis's government. There were two opposition parties that outnumbered the government party, but I think there was a chance then and a desire then for the parties to work together to bring legislation forward to make any appropriate changes.

That's what should be happening with this piece of legislation, in my view, as opposed to simply having one party that is going to exhaust all of its time regardless of whether there's anything new to add to the debate. That's unfortunate, because I think a lot of good work could be

done at the committee, and I think they have some good members who could ask some appropriate questions at that point in time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I just want to say to my colleague the Conservative MPP from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington that I think he summed it up really well, and summed it up on behalf of the people of Ontario who are clearly frustrated with the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, with their mishandling of Ornge, after they saw years of misspending and scandal at eHealth and now, of course, the gas plant scandal that is soaking taxpayers for billions of dollars.

Just to add to what the Minister of the Environment said, the MPP from St. Catharines, I think debating this bill is what democracy is all about. There are processes in place to allow this debate to continue, and I'm proud that the PC caucus is engaging in this debate. For 10 years, we've seen this government put politics over the people of Ontario. It's always been politics first, and I think, quite frankly, that's why we're in this fiscal crisis and jobs crisis that we're into now. The debt in the province of Ontario is heading towards \$300 billion. Recently, we saw a report from another economist saying that by fiscal year 2019-20, the debt in the province of Ontario is going to be \$550 billion. Clearly, this government continues to put politics over the people and over families and small businesses in this province.

Ornge is one of the biggest scandals to ever hit the province. It started under the McGuinty Liberals and is continuing under Ontario's Premier currently. They're not getting to the bottom of this. They continue to delay and not face the facts that this is a rogue organization, and we have a Minister of Health who clearly is ignoring the problem, sadly to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: I wasn't going to rise and continue this debate, but the Minister of the Environment made a few comments that caused me to.

I found it quite rich for a minister of the governing side to accuse the official opposition—and we don't agree with the official opposition, maybe—of holding up debate on this important legislation when the government prorogued the House and killed the original legislation. He accuses the Conservatives of filibustering. We may or may not agree with that, but it was that side who prorogued the House, killing not just this legislation but all the other pieces of legislation that they claimed were so, so important.

And why, Mr. Speaker, did they prorogue the House? Why? Why did they prorogue the House? They prorogued the House to avoid some of the gas plant issues they're facing now and to change the channel by picking a new leader, so they could stand on that side of the House and talk about their new government. It's the same players.

We have held our fire, but for the government to accuse people on this side of the House of delaying

legislation when they prorogued Parliament for the sole purposes of their party, I find it—in the words I've often heard from the government House leader, I find it passing strange.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: It's hard to follow some of the comments, Speaker, but I wanted to make a couple of remarks to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

I will not dwell in the past or make excuses for the lack of oversight in the past at Ornge, but let me say that there are more than 600 front-line workers there who, day in and day out, do a heck of a good job—very dedicated work on behalf of the people of Ontario.

Let me say, for the information of the members of the public, that yesterday, April 8 of this particular year, 38 patients were transported, 58 hours were flown, nine babies were transported, 13,211 miles were flown, yesterday alone. This is only part of what they do on a daily basis on behalf of the people of Ontario.

If we want to keep on dwelling on the lack of oversight in the past, we can do that, but after a while, it becomes repetitious. We don't want to cut the members' right to speak, because it's their right to speak. But after a while, not only does it get repetitious for the members—but I think we want to send it over to the committee so we can get some of those ideas and see how we can make it better. With all due respect, this is where we debate it, but that's where the actions are going to be taken that are going to make the difference.

I'm looking forward to seeing a number of positive changes, amendments that they will bring forward to the committee, where they're going to be discussing them, reincorporating them and bringing back the bill better and stronger. I hope they will do that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has two minutes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, the Minister of Innovation and of course the Minister of the Environment, who has cause for some special attention from my comments, as he was being dismissive of this debate and as he was putting false motives on this, calling this a filibuster. This is a debate.

I'd like to call the Minister of the Environment—I find it absolutely disturbing and horrifying that a minister of the crown would have such contempt for democracy and the public debate that safeguards the public interest. I'll remind the minister—he was probably in this Legislature back in the days when we had a Royal Commission Inquiry into Civil Rights back in the 1970s, by James McRuer, who clearly spelled out in that royal commission that the courts safeguard the public through the wisdom of the judges. The assembly safeguards the interest of the public through debate, but there is no safeguard to the public interest with subordinate bodies of the Legislature. The impetus of that commission into

civil rights was to provide some protection for the public from these subordinate bodies.

Here we see this government making the same mistakes over and over again, stumbling, fumbling and bumbling along, and the public has to pay and pay, with the hurt of incompetence, with those examples that I gave, with the fraud and the over-expense of Chris Mazza in Ornge, and they're just going to do it again. They cannot learn, and they cannot see what history has there to provide for them.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to add to the debate for Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, also known as the Ambulance Amendment Act. This particular piece of legislation is the current government's attempt at fixing the colossal failures of Ontario's scandal-plagued air ambulance service, Ornge, and covering up the mistakes from a failed health minister and a failed organization.

When I talk about a failed health minister, it brings back memories of the eHealth scandal which I mentioned a few moments ago; of course, the Ornge scandal; and most recently, the issue with chemotherapy drugs here in the province of Ontario that clearly put patients' lives at risk. If this minister was an employee in any small business or any business across this province or this country, they would be fired. This clearly reflects the leadership of the government under the former Premier, under Dalton McGuinty, and of course under Premier Wynne. Anyone who acts this irresponsibly and who doesn't have oversight and control of their own ministry should be gone.

If passed, this bill would give new powers to the ministry that would supposedly better equip the ministry to deal with the long list of scandals that occurred at Ornge and attempt to prevent them from happening in the future. I'm sad to say that scandals are something that we are all too familiar with when it comes to this Liberal government. Some of the changes in Bill 11 would allow providers of air ambulance services to be designated as "designated air ambulance service providers." Cabinet would be given the power to appoint provincial representatives to sit on the boards of these newly designated air ambulance service providers, of which Ornge is one.

Bill 11 also empowers the minister to issue directives to designated air ambulance services. Under this legislation, cabinet may appoint special investigators to investigate a designated air ambulance service in the following areas: the quality of the administration and management; the quality of the care and treatment provided; the services provided; and any other matter relating to an air ambulance service provider, and the minister may appoint a supervisor to oversee a designated service provider. The single biggest weakness is that this bill perpetuates the existing structure of the air ambulance service rather than recognizing that the structure of this

organization is flawed and requires direct oversight by the Minister of Health.

Bill 11 maintains that the organization should be held accountable through internal mechanisms. This bill fails to address the fact that the Minister of Health had the power to hold Ornge and its board accountable from the very beginning of the Ornge saga. The minister had the power to intervene at Ornge under the original Ornge structure, and if she had done so, she would have saved this province millions in taxpayer dollars and indeed, more importantly, the lives lost due to the failures at Ornge. Instead, the minister tried to claim that she was not responsible for what was happening at Ornge and passed the responsibility off to anyone she could.

This legislation will continue to allow the Minister of Health to pass off her responsibility to whomever he or she chooses to blame, depending on who that health minister is. This type of structure is not acceptable. It is essential that the minister take ownership for her portfolio and intervene when necessary. Instead of this legislation, we should give the Minister of Health the authority to restructure Ornge so that they are directly accountable to the Minister of Health.

I am also concerned that the Ombudsman is not given the authority to investigate Ornge under this legislation. The Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Legislature, and as such, reports only to this legislative chamber and the people's representatives who serve within it, not the Minister of Health, not the Premier.

The minister, however, thinks oversight duties are better handled by employees of Ornge itself and would report to Ornge management. This seems to be a conflict of interest. Oversight issues should be handled by external parties, not by internal management. I'm really uncertain why this is so complex here with Ornge. Basically, Ornge should report to the minister, who should provide direct oversight and supervision for this important organization. The Ombudsman should be allowed an additional level of oversight and should have purview over the minister's actions or, in this case, lack of actions at Ornge.

Was it not the total lack of government oversight that allowed for all the corruption to take place at Ornge in the first place? This is a totally failed model that is being put forth and supported in this legislation. It is just more of the same old that we have seen from this government in the past. There is no real change here, no difference and nothing new. If this government truly wanted to prevent scandals from happening, I would expect that this legislation would not only allow but would require Ombudsman oversight, and as I said, it does not.

This is not just about scandal and government waste. It is about the lives of the people of Ontario. If Ontario's air ambulance service is plagued with scandal and mismanagement, how can we trust the same organization with the lives of our loved ones in their time of need? In the past, this organization has put people's lives at risk, and this has to come to an end. It is essential that organizations that are entrusted with responding to health crises are transparent and held to account.

Another concern that I have with this particular piece of legislation is that there is limited protection for whistle-blowers. This is almost laying the groundwork for a repeat of Ornge scandals. We have seen historically at Ornge terrible injustices committed against people who have spoken out against the wrongdoings there. Failure to protect whistle-blowers will only lead to people not being willing to speak out if there is scandal taking place within the organization down the road. Bill 11 references whistle-blower protection but limits the scope of that protection. The bill does not provide across-the-board protection for these individuals. It imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who they can approach with information. Dozens of brave whistle-blowers have come forward with the shocking and devastating details of the abuse that took place at Ornge, and they often did it in secret, for fear of retaliation against them, yet the minister's idea of protecting whistle-blowers is to make them take their concerns to an individual who reports to Ornge management.

With reforms like this, it's no wonder Ornge went completely out of control. Clearly, the minister has absolutely no understanding of proper oversight mechanisms. Why else would the ministry expect people who have issues with the way an agency is being run to report their concerns to the very people who run the agency? This legislation should, rather, provide for a formal process through the Ombudsman that will ensure proper protection for whistle-blowers, and follow-up.

Something that I have not touched upon yet is the financial implications that the Ornge scandal has had on this province and the people who call Ontario home. Just this past Friday, it was announced that Ontario's private sector lost 58,000 jobs, and March marked the 75th straight month that Ontario's unemployment rate was above the national average. This is now over six years that Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average. Like the past troubles at Ornge, this is something that is truly unacceptable. With half a million Ontario residents looking for work, this government has not produced a plan to create jobs. This Premier has failed to address the jobs crisis in this province. Employers want to create jobs. Unfortunately, they can't when they are weighed down by high taxes, unnecessary red tape, and government overspending, scandal and waste.

It is legislation like Bill 11 that deliberately shifts the blame from the government and fails to create a transparent environment that prolongs Ontario's jobs crisis. Let's not forget that the CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital has said, "Things have not changed at Ornge. Whatever cultural issues are going on at that organization, things have not changed." It is clear that the current structure isn't working, and that Bill 11 is not addressing the real issues at Ornge. We are simply seeing another band-aid approach from this government.

1750

The McGuinty-Wynne government should be instilling confidence in Ontario families; instead, they are con-

tinuing down the same path that they have for the last 10 years.

I'm going to be voting against this legislation due to the fact that it leaves in place a dysfunctional organizational structure. The weakness of the accountability measures in this legislation cannot be supported.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's a pleasure to be able to stand and speak in response to some of the comments that were made by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. In his contribution to the debate, he mentioned that the Minister of Health had the power to control the structure at Ornge's inception and that the Minister of Health had the power to intervene at any point during the process.

What we've seen is that the minister had those opportunities, and the minister also had the opportunity in the last session—when, I think it was, Bill 50, which was very similar to this bill, was brought forward. Then the minister had yet another opportunity to try to make things right by reintroducing this in this session, yet still, with all of these opportunities, we see a fundamental failure to put in some provisions that will provide for the accountability and oversight that we really do need. There still isn't Ombudsman oversight, as the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex mentioned. Still, the organization cannot be called before government agencies.

The other thing that the member talked about was that it really doesn't do anything for people who are looking for work. I just wanted to spend a couple of seconds talking about what this Ornge scandal has really meant in my riding. I think we maybe need to talk about that. In addition to some of the safety issues that we've had, we've also seen the loss of jobs, because there was an air ambulance company in my riding that was put out of business. Those jobs were sent elsewhere. Those people have relocated to Manitoba, and that's not acceptable. So we need to put some provisions in place to make sure it doesn't happen again, and we need to make sure that we protect jobs and do all that we can to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think we're debating Bill 11, which is on Ornge, but it really is hard to tell. I was sort of amused by my friend from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Here is the province that has the lowest per capita spending of any province in Canada. Our workforce is 14% less than other provinces, and on top of that, we export \$11 billion in taxes. As I've said a few times, having been mayor of the capital city of the province to our immediate west, a lot of the money that goes into that community came from here.

A jobs crisis was a global problem. We have about 130% or 135% job recovery, which is unprecedented for a manufacturing economy, and we're second only to California for direct foreign investment. And the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex somehow thinks that the tax burden is part of this debate on Bill 11. He talked about the tax burden. Our tax rates for corporations are

18% less than they were under the Conservatives—18% less. I started and owned a business here, and it was a lot lower.

If we actually want to talk about the bill for a change—since we seem to be debating jobs, and they have a terrible record on it; they owe Ontarians an apology—Minister Matthews, without this bill being passed, has cleaned up Ornge. Every day, those helicopters are flying, those ambulances are doing it, and they're getting the job done.

We came here because no government is perfect, and things happen that you wish did not happen. With solid legislation to clean it up—the opposition parties are holding it up. If you actually want to clean this up and not play politics—which the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex did say—if you're not playing politics, then pass the bill or make an amendment to make it better. But this is just ridiculous nonsense, and Ontarians see through this nonsense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: I can't understand the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. How dare anyone in the McGuinty-McWynny government chastise us after you shuttered this Legislature for four months? I happen to commend the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for putting some of those comments that he made on the record today. He talked about the failed model.

In fact, I have to applaud the member for Kenora-Rainy River, who used the words "fundamental failure," because I think both those members who just spoke a few minutes ago have hit the nail on the head. We had this whole debate in the previous session. The government basically takes a bill, changes a number—from Bill 50 to Bill 11; basically changes a number—yet you shutter the Legislature for four months. What the heck is your problem? Can nobody multi-task? Was everybody working on the leadership campaign that no one could have amended this bill and taken into consideration what the opposition was saying?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would suggest that the member stick to the bill.

Mr. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, thank you. All they did was change the number from 50 to 11. They didn't take into consideration any of the very constructive suggestions that were put forward. Many members today, I've heard, have put questions and comments on the record about the Ombudsman, who made some very, very valid points that the government absolutely, positively ignored. This was just window dressing by this government. They had no intention of listening, in a minority Parliament, to the suggestions that the opposition parties have put forward.

I will take my 10 minutes of debate and I will not have someone silence me. How dare you people try to silence us from putting comments on the record on this bill? We have a right to debate this piece of legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. *Interjection.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I'd like to remind the member from Leeds–Grenville that when I said thank you for the third time, he should have gotten the message. When I stand up, we stop talking. That's how it works. Thanks. The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Throughout this debate this afternoon I've heard that the workers at Ornge have done a great job, and certainly I agree with that. They are not to blame in any of this fiasco. They worked with what was given to them and they did the best they could. When they found that there was a problem, there was someone who came out. There were several people on the front lines who came out and spoke against the problems at Ornge. We commend the workers on the work that they've done in the past and the present, and the work they'll keep doing in the future.

The real problem was that there were alarm bells given to the minister through the NDP, the Progressive Conservatives, whistle-blowers, letters that were given back in January of 2011, and there was constant denial that there was a problem until, of course, it was out in the media. Once it was out in the media, then the Liberal government, the Minister of Health—all of a sudden we got her attention. It's a sad commentary that the only time they would actually listen to a whistle-blower or listen to opposition was when the newspaper printed it.

I hope that as we're having these debates today—again, we're expressing that there's not enough oversight in this bill. We need to have strong oversight. We need to have public confidence restored in our health care system. The way of doing that is having an impartial person look into issues with the public interest at hand, and the Ombudsman serves that purpose. That's what we're saying. We hope this government will listen and we don't have to have another scandal in print before this government will listen to our suggestions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex has two minutes.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to thank the member from Kenora–Rainy River for her input into this debate; the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation; the honourable member from Leeds–Grenville; and the member, a neighbour of mine, from London–Fanshawe. Thank you very much.

First of all, I want to say there is absolutely nothing substantive in this legislation that shows that this Liberal government really cares about addressing what happened at Ornge. They're not showing Ontario families that they will do everything they can to protect their tax dollars. This bill is simply a means of providing a cover for the health minister's failings.

As I said when I kicked off this debate, Speaker, if this health minister was employed anywhere else in the province of Ontario, her boss would have fired her a long, long time ago. This has been a scandal-plagued government for 10 years. Whether it's Ornge, eHealth, the gas plant scandals, it's been politics over people. They've taken advantage of taxpayers' money, and the scandal, waste and mismanagement is running rampant throughout this government.

To address what the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation said, he ignored the fact that they have misused taxpayer money. They continue to blame the rest of the world and other provinces for Ontario's fiscal troubles and the jobs crisis here in the province. It's been their deliberate decisions that have caused Ontario to be in the mess that we're in. They inherited a province that was booming, and they're leaving it an absolute disaster: 600,000 people unemployed. The debt in the province of Ontario was \$125 billion when they took over; it's \$300 billion this year. And it's scandals like Ornge that have led to the disaster that Ontario is in.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)



Wednesday 10 April 2013

Mercredi 10 avril 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 April 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 avril 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Mr. Murray moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of permit denials and out-of-province service and evidence in certain proceedings and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / *Projet de loi 34, Loi visant à modifier le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les refus relatifs aux certificats d'immatriculation et la signification et les preuves extra-provinciales dans certaines instances, et à apporter une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member from Oakville, who is the parliamentary assistant in the ministry.

As of July 2010, there were nearly \$1 billion in defaulted POA fines. This is not including parking offences; this is serious things like speeding and dangerous driving. These are owed to our Ontario municipalities through offences under 243 acts, municipal bylaws and certain federal statutes.

Principally, we're talking about two pieces of legislation being amended today: the Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act and the Highway Traffic Act. They make up, respectively, 37% and 33% of the total defaulted in this amount; however, HTA represents 47% of total charges in default compared to only 7% under the Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act. We appreciate the challenges faced by municipalities and that this billion dollars—which derives a great deal of cost to government because of accidents; this is loss of life, damage to property and a great deal of the problems we face on our roads and the safety of our streets and the safety of our communities.

I'd like to say right off the top that we're very proud in Ontario to be consistently rated as having the safest roads and highways in North America, which is quite remarkable given how vast our territory is, how hostile our weather can be—especially in the wintertime—that we are able to have safer roads than warmer climes like Arizona or Georgia or places that don't face some of the extreme weather events that we face here.

We will be leading this process, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to just take you a little bit through some of the things we have done. This really started with the 2012 budget, which identified expanding the use of vehicle licence plate denials as a consideration. It was said at the time that, if implemented, not only could this improve municipal collection of defaulted fines and promote the administration of justice; it could also enhance road safety by making those who break the rules of the road and ignore the consequences more identifiable to police.

The ministry is chairing a province-wide municipal working group that has collaboratively identified a specific set of initiatives for further exploration that will improve the collection of defaulted fines. The working group has benefited from the participation of various municipal stakeholders, all of whom have expressed satisfaction with the progress to date. I want to thank my colleague Minister Jeffrey, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, for her leadership and work with the AMO round table in maintaining a very positive conversation between the government of Ontario and our municipal partners as we've gone through the development of this. We could not have done it without her support and without our friends at AMO.

Over the years, the province has given municipalities new and enhanced tools for fine enforcement, in addition to the existing tools. This government has been very active on this file for nine years, incrementally bringing forward new improvements. For example, drivers who fail to pay fines for traffic offences have had their driver's licences suspended until the fines are paid. Previously, plate owners who failed to pay parking or red light camera tickets are not permitted to renew their plate stickers until the fines are paid.

The proposed expansion of plate denial would do the following things: It would apply to individuals whose fine defaults stem from motor-vehicle-related—primarily HTA and CAIA—offences, and will also apply retrospectively for a specified period of time to all plates owned by a defaulter in certain circumstances. It would be supported by a simplified payment process that allows the money owed to be collected at ServiceOntario loca-

tions, similar to the current process for unpaid parking tickets.

There are other provinces that have done this. One of the things we've discovered is that sometimes people have multiple plates and they will just substitute the plates out. This will prevent that from happening, because it will cover all plates under the ownership of that person or in that household. Furthermore, by using ServiceOntario, we avoid costs and simplify the system, and take some of the pressure off municipalities and the courts in doing so.

Additionally, the proposal would give municipalities the authority to issue part I offence notices to out-of-province owners of vehicles involved in red light camera and failure-to-stop-for-school-bus offences in Ontario, and ensure that Ontario courts accept certified documents from other jurisdictions for the prosecution of these owner liability offences, as well as for parking infractions.

I just want to take a moment to thank some of our friends: Mayor Watson and the city council in Ottawa, and I want to also acknowledge the Minister of Labour, the member for Ottawa Centre, because this really started with a private member's bill a couple of years ago by the Minister of Labour, with the support of Mayor Watson and the city council in Ottawa. They brought forward this idea largely because they were having great problems in eastern Ontario, in the Ottawa Valley and in the city of Ottawa because of the number of offences that are committed by our friends in Quebec. That's not to take a shot at Quebec; I'm sure it's equally true in reverse for Ontarians in Quebec. This will actually allow municipalities—Hawkesbury, Cornwall, Ottawa, Nepean and other communities—to actively, more effectively enforce their fines. It's a very important first step for border communities.

The same is true—one of the other major advocates for this has been our friend Mayor Canfield in Kenora. Certainly anyone from northwestern Ontario knows the very close relationship between Manitoba and northwestern Ontario. Almost every Winnipegger has their cottage in Kenora or Dryden, and many people there send their kids to school and shop in Winnipeg, a relationship I'm particularly fond of, and remember God's country up there in the beautiful country of northern Ontario.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That's why we think you're a northerner.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Exactly, because I'm way out there. Thank you for that, Minister Gravelle.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's true.

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Hon. Glen R. Murray: This will help those communities as well, because I know that for smaller communities in northwestern Ontario that have out-of-province folks—a lot of people from Manitoba—this will actually level—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to be involved somehow. You're having a conversation with the minister. You might want to go through the Chair. I feel left out. Thanks.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I would never be able to overstate my fondness for you. My apologies. Thank you very much.

This is good legislation, Mr. Speaker, because it's rooted in the communities that have been affected by this. This has been folks who have heard this. I also want to say I am assuming that our friends in opposition will see this as a positive thing as well. I know that many of them have raised these kinds of concerns with me as minister. This is the kind of good legislation that's not just rooted in communities, but I think it's rooted in the experiences of every MPP in this House who tries to find solutions for their community.

This issue was also raised by the Drummond commission, which pointed out the importance of starting to collect this money, that municipalities were under increasing pressure to make investments in traffic lights and traffic controls, policing, ambulance services and paramedics, and all the things that are very expensive that go as a result of when people break the law and cause damage, death and accidents.

The POA governs non-Criminal Code offences. So we're talking about violations mostly as a result of liquor licence violations, occupational health and safety, the Environmental Assessment Act and things like that. Between 2006 and 2009, several provincial ministries—the ministry of governmental affairs, MTO, municipal affairs and housing, government services and the Attorney General's office—all participated in a comprehensive three-year review of the POA. I want to thank Attorney General Gerretsen for the leadership of his ministry and the help in bringing this forward in a proper legal context, and making sure that we were managing our relationship with the court system in the proper way. The provincial-municipal working group I mentioned earlier had representatives from AMO, from the Municipal Court Managers' Association and from the Prosecutors' Association of Ontario, all at the table under the leadership of the Attorney General. The Ministry of Transportation is coordinating the province of Ontario's efforts to improve municipal collection of defaulted POA fines.

I just want to explain a little bit about the details of what this means. I'm sure that some of this will be the debate: What does this actually mean and how are we applying this? The issue of expanded plate denial is probably the one that will be the most immediate impact of this and the one that Ontarians who have been breaking the law will—attention will be drawn to quite quickly. In order to assist municipalities in collecting the defaulted POA fines, the Ministry of Transportation will be seeking here to expand and strengthen the province's current regime to deny the issuance of renewal of vehicle plate licences, what we generally call plate denial, for defaulted fines. Specifically, there are four things that will result from this. Expanded plate denial will apply to defaulted POA fines for driving-related offences which currently result in the driver's licence suspension on fine default, including all Highway Traffic Act and Compul-

sory Automobile Insurance Act offences. It will apply to the expanded plate denial regime with respect to defaulted POA fines dating back as far as seven years to the date of implementation.

Mr. Speaker, what this means is that municipalities will be able—plate denial will go back seven years. So anyone who, five years ago or four years ago, defaulted on their fines, did not make a payment, would find plate denial. It's not going back forever, but with the guidance of the Attorney General's office and our legal advice, that is the reasonable horizon for doing that. That amounts to about \$350 million in unpaid fines if we get a collection rate which is about 60% or 70%.

The other piece of this that's important—this is quite substantial. This is about \$100 million or more that people are not paying. That money, when it's not paid by people who break the law, is paid by people who obey the law. So the people who cause the greatest amount of police costs and ambulance costs and those kinds of things are really getting away scot-free. Not only are they causing harm to their neighbours and endangering our children and our families and our communities; they're not accepting responsibility and paying for that.

So there's \$100 million more that would be going into small municipalities for critical road construction, making our streets safer, all of that kind of thing because people are scofflaws, quite frankly. We see this as positive. When you realize that 1% of gasoline tax is \$150 million, this is almost like giving 1% of gasoline tax. It's particular to our municipalities.

I've said this several times, and I want to make the point very clearly: We've had debates in this House about whether we should dilute transit funding to distribute it. Well, that may get \$15 million or \$20 million to all of those rural municipalities; this is going to put a lot more money in their pockets.

We have the MIII program for emergency funding, which is \$90 million, which is our down payment. Our applications this year were about \$400 million. Well, some of this money will actually allow those municipalities to establish their own programs. As these programs grow, particularly MIII, we are putting more money into rural municipalities and bridges through this, through MIII, and I think, hopefully, for good use.

I want to thank my friend Minister Leal, the Minister for Rural Affairs, because he very much has been an advocate for two things. He has been a big advocate for community safety, and we all know how important that is, especially if you're in a community by a highway. He has also been a big advocate that these monies go unrestricted to our municipalities. If you don't think the Minister of Rural Affairs is having a big impact on government policy, he certainly is, and you see it in this legislation today. So I want to thank him for his leadership.

There are a couple more things that I want to clarify so that, hopefully, people are very clear about what this will mean. We will be expanding a plate denial regime to all of the plates owned by the defaulter while maintaining

the current single plate denial regime for vehicle-based offences. There are some provinces that have single plate denial; some have multiple plate denial. In the surveys that we did across the country, it was very clear that multiple plate denial is the only way to secure it. It's the only way in which you can—people who are, I think, thoughtless enough to endanger other people in their bad driving don't seem to think twice about substituting plates. This will allow us to do that. And when you think about it, if your licence permit is denied, no one sees that. It's in your wallet and you don't see it, but when you don't have plates on your car, it's a little obvious. So this is a much more significant enforcement. By adding plates, it makes it very hard to drive around without your plates or your stickers.

We're also going to be improving MTO's existing single plate denial system to more effectively collect data on POA fines by allowing the denial of plates other than the plate on the vehicle at the time of the infraction in certain situations. We think that will finally close the door on people's ability to avoid their responsibilities.

What offences would be subject to plate denial under the proposed expansion? So what are these things in these—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, folks, it appears there's a lot of noise coming from the opposition side. I don't think the member from Durham is paying attention. I suggest he take it outside if he wants to hold court. The minister—I can't hear him speaking—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order? What is your point of order?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was paying attention. It was presumptuous of you to think I wasn't. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's not a point of order, but duly noted.

Continue, Minister. And a little quiet, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks very much. I'm hoping that my friends in the opposition are listening to this particularly. I have to say that people in the third party are being very attentive. That isn't lost on me, but I'm kind of fond of those folks over there.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm actually reading your bill.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much. The member for Cambridge, I know, is a friend and a keen observer of this.

But I just want to say something. We took a position that we were not going to water down transit funding and that we were not going to take money out of urban transit. When I say "urban," I'm talking about Orillia and north Quinte bay, communities that get transit funding. We're talking communities of 5,000 and 10,000 people. Well, we're talking about urban, so we're really talking about a lot of what most common-sense folks would see as a rural community. Because we realize that transit funding was really important, and that \$300 million, if diluted, was simply going to undermine the efforts of our municipal partners to do transit.

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I've also said that we will not take money from rural funds. We're not going to start spending MIII money in Toronto and Ottawa. That's going to go into the smaller communities across Ontario; we're not going to dilute that funding. This funding is a principle-based funding. It is money going to municipalities, recognizing that people who break the law incur greater costs to our municipalities, small and large, and we're not going to do that.

We as a government have made a very strong commitment, through our Premier, to expand funding for infrastructure. The Premier has shown great leadership, great clarity and great purposefulness in bringing in additional revenue to solve our infrastructure challenges, be they northern highways, rural roads and bridges, or the transit, highway and road challenges we have in our larger cities, causing congestion that's costing us a billion dollars a year.

This isn't disconnected from the larger government strategy; this speaks both to our safety agenda in communities—protecting and continuing to ensure Ontarians have the safest roads in Canada, a remarkable accomplishment—and that the money that we collect is transparent and dedicated. This is a dedicated, transparent sort of revenue. It can only go to municipalities—it's collected; it will go in—but by transferring to municipalities, we know it's going to be spent in our community, and we will not interfere with that as a government.

There are a number of other things that I could say about this, but I really want to talk a little bit about the other aspect of this bill, which is the red light cameras. I'm particularly fond of them; when I was mayor of a city, I introduced these. The fatality rates dropped dramatically. Since 1993—and I want to give some credit to both the opposition parties. The New Democratic Party, when it was in government in 1993 under Premier Rae, introduced graduated licensing, which I think was one of the more visionary and intelligent public policy initiatives. It's something that's worked.

We, in 2004, 2006—10 years later—started higher regulations of driving schools. We're still working on that, but that has continued through the New Democrats and through Conservative and Liberal administrations, and it's really strong. That was something that the official opposition very much advanced and was very supportive of. When you can do these non-partisan things—and you've heard me speak often about my desire to see this as a more non-partisan place; I always think it's better to say that when you're in government, because it means something. It's always easy when you're in opposition to say that this should be a non-partisan place, and I appreciate my friends who share that view.

But let's just look at what that means. We've had a 31% increase in young drivers, in that 16-to-19 group, and up to 24. That's 31% more since 1993, in the last 20 years, and do you know what's happened to our accident and fatality rate in that group? It's down 58%. So if you don't think that the action of 107 MPPs acting on this kind of legislation matters, I would say one of the best

cases for all-party support for this kind of positive legislation—I'm going to take a guess that it's not just a Liberal view; I think this is a shared view between all three parties—is that that was something that we all respected and we brought forward.

There are probably about 60 or 70 people who are alive today that probably would have been killed in fatalities if we had continued with the same accident rate before graduated licensing. This actually takes a stronger measure, continues down that tradition in Ontario and makes it very hard for those same people who are breaking the law to get away with it. It's pretty hard to drive without your plates.

I think this is something, quite frankly, that all three parties in this House share and can take credit for. The fact that Ontario does have the safest roads in North America is a remarkable accomplishment for a four-season community that has such vast roads. If you've driven through parts of northern Ontario in the winter—I've done a lot of driving up to Thunder Bay, Kenora and Dryden, and up to Hearst; those highways, in a blizzard or in a storm, are pretty challenging. The fact that we can do that is remarkable, so I would just like to take a moment to thank previous governments of various political stripes for their continued leadership on this, and I hope that that spirit of collaboration will continue.

Getting back to red light cameras—and again, I want to thank Mayor Watson and Mayor Canfield for their advocacy for this, and to AMO. I have to say that one of the good things that happened that this government has done was our consultative round table with AMO, and the relationship—my friends Minister Jeffrey and Minister Leal, whom I've had the great pleasure and honour to work with around ROMA and around the Ontario Good Roads Association, the last conference we had, I'm sure they would tell you the same—this was an issue that has come up over and over again. It's something that all three of us committed we would act on quickly.

Interjection: Minister Sergio, a great city councillor in Toronto.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Absolutely, Minister Mario Sergio, who always has his finger on my back on safety. For seniors, we don't want to be ageist. We know a lot of our seniors are good drivers, so going to this kind of system means—it doesn't matter whether you're 72 or 22; as long as you follow the rules, you can keep your licence. We want to be fair-minded about that.

Let me get back to red light cameras, because that's where I was going. I was wandering off a bit there. Six Ontario municipalities—Ottawa, the city of Toronto, Hamilton, Peel, Halton and Waterloo—have requested that MTO amend the current legislative framework to facilitate the mailing of RLC tickets to out-of-town vehicle plate owners to enhance the prosecution of RLC offences, which are those road offences I mentioned earlier, by the use of certified records for jurisdictions to establish vehicle ownership before a provincial offences court authorizes it.

Although these RLC municipalities are able to use part III of the charging process, it is not being pursued against

out-of-province RLC offenders as municipalities believe it is too onerous, and these municipalities are missing out on that much-needed revenue. For consistency, the Ministry of Transportation is proposing to provide municipalities with the authority to issue part I POA tickets by mail to owners of vehicles that are registered out of province but were involved in a fail-to-stop-for-a-school-bus offence in Ontario and to ensure that Ontario courts accept certified documents from other jurisdictions for prosecution of part II POA parking tickets. The road safety value and the continued success of the program are contingent on the effective enforcement and administration of justice. The issuance of a part I POA offence notice by mail to out-of-province RLC offenders would ensure that these offenders do not go unpunished. Between 2001 and 2011, a rather large number—381,577—of RLC charges were processed, of which 95% gained a conviction.

How will the government operate with this new legislative power? Under this initiative, the province's role in RLC and school bus ticketing processes would remain pretty much the same. Municipalities would continue to be responsible for all aspects of ticketing out-of-province RLC and school bus offenders, including entering into an arrangement with the jurisdiction that has the plate registering information; developing a mechanism for obtaining the out-of-province plate owner's information and address; deciding whether they would issue a ticket or, in the case of RLC offences, have the Toronto processing centre issue it on their behalf; ensuring that the documents provided by out-of-province jurisdictions are in a form that is acceptable to the court; and finally, determining how to proceed if the out-of-province plate owner defaults on their fine. That will be something we will be monitoring quite carefully to see what the compliance is. If this works in the way we imagine it will work, we should see at least a two-thirds recovery and we will not need to take further action; if we do, then we'll have to consider future action at that time.

Mr. Speaker, we looked at the experience in collecting parking and red light camera tickets. Municipal fine collection experts have indicated that plate denial, right now, is viewed as the most effective fine enforcement mechanism. Based on the results of a jurisdictional survey issued by Ontario to other Canadian jurisdictions, five out of the seven respondents utilize plate denials as a collection tool that applies to all motor vehicle offences under their respective highway traffic statutes. Four out of five of these jurisdictions have multiple plate denial regimes. So we will be the sixth province in Canada to go to plate denial, and we will be the fifth to do multiple plate denial. So we are fortunate to have considerable experience from our Canadian provincial sister provinces in this initiative, and we have a fairly good idea of how this will work.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: Are they brothers or sisters?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: These days, they're sisters. We've changed. There are some brothers there too.

The Drummond commission report was quite important to us. Mr. Drummond went through our Highway Traffic Act and went through the Ministry of Transportation. We have taken the Drummond report quite seriously. There are a number of recommendations that we are pursuing quite aggressively. This was one of the most significant recommendations that Mr. Drummond made for our ministry. It is one that we've taken quite seriously.

I also want to thank a couple of folks before I conclude my remarks in the next minute or two and turn it over to my colleague and my friend the MPP for Oakville, who has been a great champion on this. I have benefited from his friendship and his wise counsel now through two ministries. I'm very fortunate to have one of the best parliamentary assistants around. Our shared Irish lineage gives us a fine appreciation of fine Irish beer and whiskey and a few other things.

The Ontario Association of Police Services Boards and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and particularly the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, all came together to advocate for this.

I want to also particularly thank the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, known as the OAPSB, who were down here and who I know lobbied very heavily for this. I know many of you met with them, and they reported back to us that they got a very fair hearing from members on both sides of the House. I know that without their leadership, we would not have been able to get this this far.

This was a budget commitment last year. It was a commitment of the Drummond report. Our Premier has laid out a very strong commitment to safer communities, safer roads, more autonomy for municipalities and more choices for municipal governments.

We're also committed to making sure that people accept their responsibilities for the things that they do. We also see this as over \$100 million in the future, every year, going into our municipalities to help them keep their streets safe. This meets our budget commission.

I want to thank the opposition parties for previous legislation and leadership they have shown on this issue. I hope this is not viewed as a partisan bill but one that is a good piece of public policy and one that builds on the tradition of all three parties and past governments.

I will, with your permission, turn it over to the MPP for Oakville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 34. I think a lot of us come to this House having served in other levels of government, most usually at the council level—on a regional council; perhaps on a town or a city council.

From time to time, I think, during the 18 years I served at that level, I wondered if I was working with the province or if the province was working against us. That applied to all three parties, because there seemed to be some very obvious things that could be done, in partner-

ship and collaboration, that would make the operation of good government in the province of Ontario, at all levels, something that could be accomplished much more easily if the two levels of government worked together.

I like this piece of legislation particularly because it doesn't just impact us here at the province; it impacts those people, those elected officials and those taxpayers and constituents, in all the communities around the province of Ontario that are dealing with the issues surrounding road safety.

Those members who have served on council, I think, anywhere in the province—I think this is true of all communities around the province. Despite us sort of waxing quite eloquently about our political philosophies, if you've served on council, you'll know the number one phone call you get is about speeding and red lights and people not stopping at stop signs in particular neighbourhoods. It's the practical, everyday stuff that they expect of a councillor, they expect of their council, they expect of the mayor, and anything we can do to assist in that regard at this level of government, I think, is something that is of tremendous advantage to all citizens of Ontario.

I guess what we have in the province of Ontario is a bit of a social contract. In order not to have people travelling 200 miles an hour in our neighbourhoods, we agree to travel at 50 kilometres an hour. In order not to have people driving through stop signs, we agree that we will stop at stop signs. We also put in a system of justice to administer that, and we agree that if the police pull us over or we get caught by a red light camera and the charge is justified, a good citizen will pay that fine, and say, "I was wrong." The price we pay for having everybody else act safely is that I act safely myself.

What's happening right now in the province of Ontario, and probably in other jurisdictions around North America, is what appears to be a growing problem, to the tune of about \$100 million a year. Some people are just choosing to ignore the fines that are being administered by the justice system, just choosing to walk away from them, and if they're from another jurisdiction, they are choosing to drive away from them. Because of the fact that perhaps the offence happened in Ontario but the person happens to live in Quebec or Michigan, they seem to think that once they cross that border, the offence they committed in the jurisdiction somehow doesn't apply to them anymore, that they shouldn't be subject to any further action, that they can just leave it in their past. Other people continue to drive in the province of Ontario and continue to just decide that they're not going to pay that fine.

It seems to me that one of the ways we can compel people to do what the rest of us are doing and paying any fine we're issued, if we do receive an offence which we are guilty of, is to say when you show up on that day to renew your plate, your sticker, that the province of Ontario says, "No, it's time to pay up now; you pay up now or you don't get your sticker." It's a very practical way of doing things, something we can do through our Service-Ontario offices and, more importantly, something that's

going to provide revenue for people in the province of Ontario and for those jurisdictions in the province of Ontario that since the global economic turnaround have been looking for ways to be able to continue to provide services to their ratepayers and constituents, but have also been understanding that the competition for funds out there right now, including the taxpayer's wallet, shows that we are operating in a changed world since the middle of this decade.

So this provides that extra revenue stream. It's the right thing to do; it's the moral thing to do. I think it enhances road safety. As all of us are driving around, the vast majority of us submit to the system and say, "Yes, if I get caught by the police and I've done something wrong, I will pay that fine before its due date." A minority in the province of Ontario have decided that somehow those rules don't apply to them, that they can do what they want, they can drive any way they want, and when it comes time to pay the fine if they have been caught and tried, they simply ignore it. This puts a roadblock in the way of those people who would choose to ignore the law. Those people who decide they're not going to stop for school buses, for example, those people who decide they're going to run the red light and put other people's lives in jeopardy, shouldn't be allowed to run around the province of Ontario unfettered. What we're essentially saying to these people is, "You don't get your sticker." If you don't get your sticker on your plate, it's easily identifiable by the police in the province of Ontario if you're driving with an expired sticker. It's an immediate sign, an immediate red flag to our police services.

Incidentally, this legislation is supported very, very strongly by the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards. The headline of the news release they put out was very simple: "Ontario Association of Police Services Boards Welcomes New Measures on Unpaid Fines." What they're saying is that we're expending money at the local level, at the regional level and at the provincial level to provide for policing in this province, and what is happening is, the police are doing their work: They're going out and finding people on our streets who are disobeying the laws, and what they are saying to those people is, "Here's a ticket. You have a chance for your day in court. We'll decide whether you are innocent or guilty, and if you are guilty, you'll be required to submit a fine."

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So we go through all that expense. We provide the funding for the police. The taxpayers at the local level provide the funding for the police. Then, when it comes to the end of that process and it's time for the convicted person to pay up, somehow we feel we don't have a system in place that compels some people to do that. That seems to me to be very silly. It seems to be something that the Ontario police service boards also find silly, and it has been asking for action in this regard.

Here's another quote that I want to read. It says, "These problems are not new. Municipalities, courts, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders have been

advocating for decisive action for ... years. The persistent problem of unpaid" provincial offence "fines undermines the justice system, frustrates law enforcement officers and municipal fine collection agents, and denies municipalities and the provincial government desperately-needed revenues."

I don't think it could be put any more clear than the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards has said in that quote. I think it wraps it all up very, very nicely. It gives us an opportunity to do something that other organizations, other levels of government have been asking us to do so that we can work together and we can enhance the relationship we have with towns and cities, municipalities around the province of Ontario.

It's no small problem. Most people, I think, in my community of Oakville—and certainly yours, Speaker, in Hamilton, I think are very similar people—would be very surprised to realize that there's about a billion dollars that's outstanding out there. It's not a small problem; it's no small problem. It's a billion dollars that could be put to very, very good use.

I need services in my community. People need enhanced services in my community. That's true, I think, of every member here. If we can get more money into the hands of our local government from people who owe that money, from people who should have paid that money in the past, I think that nothing but good can come from that.

I think it really enhances the reputation we have and the standing we have as either the safest road system in all of North America or one of the safest road systems in all of North America if people who are using those roads know that they're going to be held accountable for their actions on those roads. I think it makes them drive safer. I think if people come to the understanding that, "You know what? I might get caught by the police doing something I shouldn't. I'll speed through a residential neighbourhood; the police may or may not pick me up. But it doesn't matter because I'm not going to pay that fine anyway. And it doesn't matter if I pay the fine or not; I can still continue to drive, and the chances of me being caught driving around with unpaid fines is very low, so I'll simply ignore the system and I'll continue to do whatever it is that I shouldn't be doing. If I see a school bus, I may think, 'Well, I'm just going to drive right by the thing because the chances of there being any consequence for me in the end are very, very low.'"

By passing Bill 34, what this House is saying is that the chances of that consequence being something that the offender would be subject to are increased. It becomes higher. Someone, when they're making that decision to break the law as either a speeder or someone running through a red light or any one of a number of traffic offences that make our communities more dangerous—when people make the decision to do that, they'll know there will be a consequence.

When they are making that decision, when they're going through that decision process in their mind and they think, "You know what? I'll probably get caught if I

do this. I probably won't be able to renew my plate if I do this. So maybe perhaps I shouldn't do this," I think it just enhances that reputation that we have in the province, and I think throughout all of North America, that this is a safe place to drive, in the province of Ontario, and that if you choose, by your own individual actions as a motorist, to make it a less safe place to drive, you will be held accountable by the justice system.

When you look at the amount of charges that are in default in the province of Ontario—and this dates back quite a number of years; I think over 40 years—it's still a large number of outstanding offences. These are offences where the police system or the traffic system have done what we asked them to do, have done what we paid them to do, have gone out and found somebody on the streets doing something dangerous and have issued them a ticket. There are close to 2.5 million outstanding charges; charges that are in default dating back to around the 1970s. Those charges could be any one stemming from an offence under 243 pieces of provincial legislation. Sometimes it's a bylaw in a municipality and sometimes it even applies to the federal level.

There's a number of reasons why people don't pay their fines, but at the end of the day, fines need to be paid. If the justice system has determined that a person is guilty, then certainly the next step, I think, as a good citizen in the province of Ontario, as a safe driver, is to step to the bar and to pay that fine.

According to the most recent data we've been provided by the Ministry of the Attorney General, approximately 75% of the total amount of fine payments in default is from the period from 2000 to 2010. When you look at that, you realize that we've got an increasing problem; that during the last decade people in increasing numbers have decided that somehow they can get away with this. Somehow, between 1970 and 2000 people were doing it, but not in large numbers. What you've seen is a huge acceleration in the past decade of people who are just walking away from that process and deciding that somehow this doesn't apply to them. We're seeing, as I said, the problem increase by about \$100 million a year.

We've already provided some tools to municipalities to enforce Provincial Offences Act fines. They are responsible for the enforcement and the collection of Provincial Offences Act fines. They decide themselves, at the local level, when and how they're going to apply the various fine enforcement tools that are available to them. All three parties, I would hope, Speaker—we'll find out as we hear more from the other parties on this—I hope there's some sort of unanimity in the House that this is a tool that we can extend to our brothers and sisters in the different levels of government to allow them to do their job better, to ensure that the money that is due to them from people breaking the law is, indeed, much easier to collect.

We have already implemented a few new initiatives to help. We've got online fine payment systems now so that when the time comes to make that fine payment, you don't have to take time off work and visit an office. You

can go online in the evening and you can make arrangements for that. We've made it easier for the people. We've given access or provided information for those people at the local level who are trying to collect fines to access the Ministry of Transportation database. That helps them find people who perhaps have moved. Some municipalities have decided that they're going to use agencies instead of doing this. They developed guidelines; they've developed best practices.

So, simply what we're saying is that the municipal collection of fines should be a priority for this government because it's going to promote the administration of justice in the province. It's going to ensure that those who break the law and ignore the consequences are held accountable.

I'm going to end there, Speaker. I know I have some time left but I think some bills just become self-evident, that it's a sensible thing to do when you've got support from the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, when you've got support from municipalities, from towns and cities. Perhaps it's time that we move ahead on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege to stand before the Legislature this morning and to address Bill 34, an act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of permit denials and out-of-province services.

The Minister of Transportation actually made a very compelling argument whereby tightening the rules to collect outstanding offences could in fact have these finances going back to municipalities, and that money could in fact be used for road repair, bridge repair and so on. To me, that's a very compelling argument, because we know the state of the current economy per se.

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The member from Oakville, as well as the Minister of Transportation, did also comment on the fact that we have the safest roads in North America, and I do want to believe that as well. However, I will say with slight tongue in cheek that I recall back in 2007 there was an election promise—imagine that; an election promise—to enhance the 401 between Ridgeway and Tilbury whereby they were going to put in the cement barriers to minimize accidents whereby transports and cars would cross over the median. Unfortunately, that hasn't happened yet. We're still waiting on the 2007 promise. Unfortunately and regrettably—and I'm sure they would also agree: regrettably—there have been some fatalities, most recently last year, where a mother lost her life when a transport crossed the median and killed her and, I believe, a sibling as well.

However, again, I do agree with the minister with regard to this bill, Bill 34. I like the fact that it can go back seven years and collect, I believe the minister stated, \$350 million, based on a 60% to 70% collection rate. Therefore, I commend them for this act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It is with pleasure that I rise to speak to this bill.

When I was first elected, I always said that where something was good, I would highlight it; where there were good ideas, I would give credit where credit is due. This is absolutely something that municipalities have been asking for for a very, very long time. This is something that will benefit their communities, and I absolutely agree with some of the comments that the prior member said as well: It will go toward their bridges, their repairs, their infrastructure, their water treatment and so on and so forth. So this is a good thing.

The concern is: Is it just a one-liner? I appreciate the fact that the member actually made a comment indicating that this is good. He kept his comments short. I'm hoping that this will progress and move forward so we can actually have those discussions at the committee stages so we could actually implement this, because that is certainly one of the concerns that the municipalities had: How is this going to be implemented? How are the regulations going to be developed? How much of it is going to be municipally governed? What is going to be our responsibility? Is this going to be a one-liner that we're going to see in tomorrow morning's paper which is going to be great, fantastic news and we get all these fuzzy-wuzzy feelings about it?

This is a good idea; this is a good initiative. We need to push it forward and we need to get it to a level that will assist these municipalities so that we can give them the tools that they need in order for them to collect those funds so that they can actually get the support they need and they can do the changes and implement the infrastructure they need.

I am looking forward to this debate. I'm listening very attentively, along with our caucus as well. We definitely need to push this to committee so we can have the discussions that are needed to assist the municipalities with the regulations of how this is actually going to be implemented.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I think we heard a number of positive comments this morning from the Minister of Transportation/the Minister of Infrastructure and, of course, my colleague the member from Oakville.

Over the years, I've contributed mightily through the POA office in Peterborough. I'm notorious for getting parking tickets. I remember that when I was a city councillor, I'd be at agency meetings with various groups in Peterborough. The meetings always ran over time; I always got parking tickets. It was interesting: I had a straight path to the finance department in the city of Peterborough. Every week I had to make a contribution through my accumulation of parking tickets.

Certainly, this goes back. When David Crombie did his work in the late 1990s through services that were delivered at the municipal level, he looked at the Provincial Offences Act as a source of revenue to assist municipalities with their ongoing obligations in terms of

bridges, roads, and expansion to waste water treatment plants. This bill, Bill 34, has the support of AMO, I suspect. I know it has the support of Mayor Bennett in the city of Peterborough and of J. Murray Jones, the warden of Peterborough county. This was an issue that was brought to us at ROMA.

There's a real opportunity to collect those fines and provide those dollars back to municipalities. Mr. Speaker, it would be my hope that we could really reach a consensus with House leaders, have a minimal time of debate, get this bill in committee, get this bill past royal assent, and really help out our municipalities with another revenue tool that they would like to see in place very quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I recognize the minister's statement this morning on Bill 34, and his parliamentary assistant, the member from Oakville.

I think it's important to put things in perspective. Some would say, "What took so long?" Some would say, "Could they not have handled this in regulation?" But the history of this, under the Provincial Offences Act and Highway Traffic Act offences—back in 1998, Premier Mike Harris, when they were looking at municipal alignment of services and revenue, made the change which committed this revenue to the municipalities. In many cases, law-abiding citizens do pay these fines, and he's never once been thanked for giving that new revenue to municipalities.

So in that context, I think, in regulation they can, under some offences today, impound the car, suspend licences. That's available today under impaired driving. These changes are important, and I believe our critic, Frank Klees, will be supportive of that, as well as our leader, Tim Hudak. It's getting the job done.

Again, going back to the simple part of it, without being too contrary about it, what took so long? This bill itself is about one page long. It's in two languages. We could get on with more important things: getting to the bottom of scandals, getting to the bottom of making sure that we can afford the future for our children. This province is out of control.

I don't want to change the topic totally. This is one small administrative piece that has taken them 10 years to deliver on. It's an example of a government with no plan and no vision for Ontario.

I would think we'd be supportive of this, and I'm sure our critic, Frank Klees, the member from Newmarket-Aurora, will make it very clear.

But I want to leave one more thing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Oakville has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in response. Thank you to the members from Chatham-Kent-Essex; from Algoma-Manitoulin; the Minister of Rural Affairs, my colleague; and the member from Durham.

Most of the comments, I think, were quite constructive, and there seems to be a willingness in the House to make sure that this moves forward. Like the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, I want to see it move forward quickly. I don't see why it shouldn't, if all three parties co-operate and if we hear some of the comments that we've heard from the government, saying that the opposition has done some good things in this regard. The opposition remarks, for the most part, maybe except for the member from Durham, were fairly positive comments and designed to move this legislation forward.

I think if we approach this issue through the government House leader's office and the offices of the House leaders of the other two parties, this is something that we should be able to do in fairly quick order, in my opinion.

I think municipalities, ratepayers, constituents at all levels would be happy to see us working together, not only amongst ourselves but between the levels of government, because certainly this is something that is fairly simple, in my mind. I think what it says, quite simply, if you had to describe it to somebody, is that if you're not paying your traffic fines, you're not going to get your plates next time. And it's not just for the car that you committed the offence on; it's for any vehicle you own. So when you show up at the MTO office, when you show up at the ServiceOntario kiosk and you ask for your plate to be renewed, they're going to tell you, "No; you pay your fines or you don't get your plate." It's that simple.

For anybody from out of the province, out of the jurisdiction that we drive in, if they commit an offence here, it will also make it easier for us to track those people down and to hold them accountable, the way that Ontarians are often held accountable in other jurisdictions.

There's a little chirping from the opposition, but I think most of this, most of the comments, I think, we've heard this morning have been positive ones, and this bill should move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? That's carried.

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 0959 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted today to welcome Ontario's paramedics to the Legislature. It's

their first Queen's Park day, and I know all members of this Legislature are delighted that paramedics are with us today.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like to welcome paramedic Gil Kisielius from Peel emergency services. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome James Downham to the House this morning. He's representing the Waterloo-Wellington Community Support Services, who are taking the lead on a centralized referral system for all community support services in partnership with community care access centres, the first of its kind in Ontario. Welcome, Mr. Downham.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Page captain Morgan Palmer's family is here today. We've got Janet Palmer, Aaron Palmer, Paige Palmer and Brock Palmer. I believe Aaron Palmer grew up in Newbury, so he's an ex-constituent of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex—of Monte McNaughton. Welcome today.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to introduce and welcome today Smokey Thomas, the president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, some of his executive members and other members of the union: Eddy Almeida, Roxanne Barnes, Jamie Ramage, Marnie Niemi Hood and Gord Longhi, as well as Kyle Vose.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm looking forward to a meeting with the Ontario paramedics' Marvin Austin and also a constituent person, Alex Greco, who will be in the Legislature here today.

Miss Monique Taylor: Today it is my pleasure to welcome Ryan Baird here. He's a student at Ryerson, in public policy and administration. Welcome, Ryan.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Can you explain to the Legislature the compelling provincial interest to impose a \$60 trades tax on a part-time hairstylist?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The compelling provincial interest in establishing a College of Trades, Mr. Speaker, is that we want an industry-driven governing body. We want to make sure that people who work in the skilled trades will have decision-making over the matters that affect them. We share the opposition's commitment to encouraging young people to enter the skilled trades. We also believe, Mr. Speaker, that skilled trades should have the same authorities, privileges and autonomy as teachers, doctors and nurses—all of the people who have professional colleges.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Those are different professions—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, the member opposite says that those are different professions. We would like to say that we think that the same status, the same

respect should be accorded to all of the people who work in the skilled trades. That is the provincial interest.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't think I heard an answer to my question, which is: What is the compelling provincial interest in assigning a new trades tax of \$60 to part-time hairstylists, to young men or women who want to be apprentices in a skilled trade, just coming out of school with tuition bills, who will be hit by a new \$60 tax? Why would you impose a \$120 tax on small business?

It's basic economics, really. As you know, Premier, if you tax something, you get less of it; if you lower taxes, you get more of it. Clearly, if you wanted to create more jobs in the skilled trades, the worst thing you want to do is impose a new tax on those very same trades. Please tell me that you do oppose the new skilled trades tax, from hairstylists to electricians.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I support is an industry-driven governing body that allows young people in skilled trades to have the opportunity to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to jump right to individuals. Quite frankly, yesterday was an opportunity for us to improve. We will improve today.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

What I support is young people in skilled trades to have the same privileges and the same autonomy as people in other professions.

The member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, positions himself as someone who supports the skilled trades. I would think that he would support the same status and privilege and autonomy being accorded to people in skilled trades as people in other professions, and that he would recognize that there is a provincial interest in putting that status in place and making sure that the same respect is accorded to people who work in skilled trades.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm proud to be part of a party with somebody as strong as the member for Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop, who knows this industry inside and out.

I stand with Garfield and what he says. This is a guy who is a plumber by training, ran his own business and speaks from the heart, as you'll hear shortly. He has compassion and passion for the sector, and he knows we need to clear aside obstacles to help young people get in the trades, clear aside obstacles to help small business do better.

In this environment under the McGuinty and Wynne governments, where Ontario is first in debt and last in jobs, why in the world would you bring in a new bureaucracy and a new tax to punish those very same young people whom we're fighting for to open up opportunities? Why do you want to shut them down in the skilled trades? Why do you want to impose a new tax on hard-working women and men and small business owners in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am not going to engage in the kind of denigration of Ontario that the Leader of the Opposition—I'm just not going to go there. I actually have a lot of respect for the member for Simcoe North, and I know that he's passionate about his—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to pass the test.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I actually have a lot of respect for the member for Simcoe North. I know that he's passionate about the causes that he takes on and I know that he works very hard in his constituency. I share his desire to help young people know what the range of opportunities is to be able to develop the skills and to be able to get into a skilled trade. But I think those people in skilled trades should be accorded the same respect, they should have the same privileges and the same autonomy to work with their peers and to have a college in the same way that other professions do. That's why I'm supportive of the move to have a College of Trades.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Quite frankly, there is no respect shown when you slap a brand new tax on the backs of working people in the trades. There is no respect shown when you put new obstacles in the way of people advancing their careers, starting their own business and getting job opportunities. In fact, this shows tremendous disrespect for hard-working men and women in the province whom we want to help succeed—more take-home pay and good jobs.

The Premier's only defence now seems to be that there is widespread support for this issue, but I will tell you, Premier, the coalition opposed to the trades tax involves 5,000 small and medium businesses representing 130,000 workers across the province. The unions have expressed their concern and their opposition to this.

1040

When there was a college of physicians or nurses, there was broad-based support in the employers and the professions. That does not exist anywhere when it comes to the College of Trades. There is no support in the industry. Premier, will you do the right thing and stop this College of Trades in its tracks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you very much. The Leader of the Opposition's description of the College of Trades is simply completely inaccurate. His rhetoric, frankly, is an insult to every hard-working skilled tradesman and woman in this province.

It comes down to this: We believe that our skilled tradespeople are very capable of regulating themselves, like countless other workers do. The Leader of the Opposition, unfortunately, arrogantly believes he knows

better; his party knows better. We don't agree with them. Why does the Leader of the Opposition believe that teachers, physiotherapists, chartered accountants and social workers—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Barrie, come to order.
Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Speaker. Why does the Leader of the Opposition believe that teachers, physiotherapists, chartered accountants and social workers are capable and smart enough to govern themselves and have their own regulatory body but not skilled trade workers?

We support the skilled trade workers in this province. We believe in them. We believe they're ready for self-governance—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: What is disappointing to those of us on this side of the House is how increasingly, day after day, week after week, the Liberal government sounds an awful lot like the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government in heading down their paths.

Premier, you said in the last couple of days that agencies like the Ontario Electronic Stewardship, the Ontario Tire Stewardship, Waste Diversion Ontario—in short, the agencies you created, these arm's-length agencies to be self-governing. You've raised concerns about the eco tax. You want to have a conversation about the eco tax going forward.

Your record with these arm's-length agencies, including Ornge, has been far from stellar—in fact, quite the opposite. Why don't you stop this newest agency in its tracks? Why don't you avoid a future conversation and make the right decision starting now, starting today, and stop this College of Trades and its tax grab right in its tracks?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Leader of the Opposition is going all over the map on this, so let me go back to the College of Trades, which was his original question.

The idea of the College of Trades is to provide greater consumer protection. Why would the PCs be opposed to this? The idea of the College of Trades is to help combat the underground economy and create a level playing field for our skilled tradespeople. Why would the PC Party be opposed to that? It will also make important decisions regarding standards like apprenticeship ratios.

The PCs simply believe that these decisions ought to be made here at Queen's Park by politicians with whatever agendas those politicians may have. We have confidence that the skilled tradespeople across this province will have the expertise to make the right decisions to drive the skilled trades forward in this province to a new era where our skilled trades will rise way above where they're at—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier—I'm just going to ignore the minister and his tiresome talking points

because I think our guy from Simcoe North knows what he's talking about. He talks to the workers. He knows the path we have to head down to create good jobs in our province again.

Premier, may I remind you that your experiments to date with arm's-length agencies, from eHealth to the eco tax agencies to Ornge, have been a dismal performance? You yourself are starting to question the new taxes imposed by the eco tax agencies. I think you should cut to the chase here and stop this in its place.

I'm going to argue this, too: The so-called College of Trades is not exactly off to a good start. They're going to have 75 bureaucrats working at the College of Trades. That's why they're imposing this tax on working people. They're going to hire 150 trades police to go into hair salons and electricians' shops to inspect and see if they're paying the tax. Do you think that an agency with 75 bureaucrats and 150 tax police is off to a good start, or should we just end this thing before it gets going?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, the rhetoric of the Leader of the Opposition on this issue is absolutely beyond belief. What we see through his rhetoric is that it's pretty obvious that that leader and his party do not believe in worker safety across Ontario, do not believe in the importance of enforcing safety standards, do not believe in the importance of our skilled trades sector to tackle the underground economy.

We believe that we want to put a level playing field in place for our skilled trades workers across this province. We're listening very carefully to what our skilled trades workers across the spectrum are saying to us. They want a level playing field, and they want us to tackle the underground economy. They want to ensure that they have safe and healthy work environments.

I think the Leader of the Opposition should want those things as well. I'm surprised it appears that he doesn't.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. This morning, we learned that the company that provided Ontario hospitals with diluted chemotherapy drugs has been operating without any oversight or regulation. The consequences, Speaker, have been disastrous.

Can the Premier explain how her government has allowed this to happen?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health will want to speak to the supplementary, but I just want to reiterate what I said before: that it is unacceptable that the doses of chemotherapy would not have been accurate. That's why we have put in place an expert panel. That's why we have asked an independent third party to review our cancer drug system.

I'm very pleased that Dr. Jake Thiessen will be leading that review and I thank him for that. He's a pharmacy expert; he's the founding director of the University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy.

We need to get to the bottom of this. We absolutely need to talk to everyone who is an expert in the field who understands how this should work. That is why we have asked the people that we've asked to take a look at it and get to the bottom of what happened.

It is unacceptable, and my thoughts are with the patients and their families who are having to deal with this. It never should have happened.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this is a fundamental question of safety, and it's a question that should be easy to answer. As Canadians, we cherish our public health care system, and we expect the government to make sure that it provides safe and reliable treatment when people need it. This didn't happen for hundreds of people receiving cancer treatment, and that is simply unacceptable.

Ontario's Ombudsman is the person who has the tools and the tenacity to look at what caused this mess. Will the Premier let him do that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I can assure you that ensuring the care and safety of patients is my first and highest priority. Patients cannot and should not be caught in jurisdictional squabbles about who is responsible. They deserve to have confidence in our health care system.

This morning I met with the College of Pharmacists. I am very pleased that they are prepared to do everything possible to get answers to questions that have been raised. I will work with the College of Pharmacists to give them the tools they need to get answers to the questions that we all have.

Health Canada has a very important role to play. They are partners in this, but I am not prepared to wait. It is urgent that we act now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is clear that there is no regulatory framework whatsoever for these cancer drugs and who knows how many other drugs here in the province of Ontario. This is a systemic issue that the Ombudsman should be looking at.

Here's what patients see in Ontario: A for-profit company has taken over a critical part of our health care system. People's lives are literally in the balance, and the government doesn't provide any oversight whatsoever. Over the course of an entire year, a serious error put hundreds of people's lives at risk. This isn't acceptable.

The government cannot sweep it under the carpet. Will the Premier admit we need a real investigation and let the Ombudsman investigate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are in complete agreement that a real investigation must take place, Speaker. That is already under way. We have brought together the working group of the affected hospitals, the Pharmacists' Association and Health Canada. We're inviting New Brunswick to be part of this as well.

Every single person in our health care system has the same determination and passion to understand what hap-

pened. I'm delighted that Dr. Jake Thiessen, an eminent person who understands health care, who understands drugs, who understands cancer drugs, has agreed to step up and lead this investigation. He is exactly the kind of health care leader who wants to make it right for patients. I am delighted he's taking this on. He is the right person with the right credentials, the passion and determination—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

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TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's disconcerting to watch the giggles on the other side of the room during the questions, Speaker.

My next question is to the Premier, and it's about the budget. People know the province is facing some pretty tough times, but they also want their government to recognize that they are facing tough times too, and that's while some people are doing better than ever. So people are having a rough time, but some people are doing really great in the province of Ontario.

Many people, however, feel they're being squeezed right out of the middle class. They want a balanced approach to this upcoming budget. Does the Premier think it's balanced or fair to cut taxes for Ontario's wealthiest corporations in tough times?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I certainly agree with the leader of the third party that we need a balanced approach as we write this budget. I'm very clear that we need to take into account that people have been through a rough time, that there are people who are looking for jobs across the province. We need to make sure that we put in place the supports, for example, for small businesses, because that's where the job creation is happening.

That's why it has been really important for me to take part in discussions around the province—11 different discussions—with people who are at the forefront of creating those jobs. We need to make sure that small businesses, small manufacturing and large manufacturing have the supports that they need and have the conditions in place.

That's why infrastructure is so important to me, that we have the right infrastructure across the province so that businesses can thrive, because they are where the jobs are created, and that's the most important thing we can do to grow the economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We're hearing a lot of the same old talk and a lot of the same old excuses from this government, and we're not seeing a lot of fairness here in Ontario.

The CEO of the Royal Bank, and the chair of the government's Jobs and Prosperity Council, got a seven-figure raise this year and is now contracting jobs out of

Ontario. I know Gord Nixon. He's a nice guy, but his bank does not need a tax break right about now.

Will the Premier commit to putting the brakes on the reckless giveaway that's coming down the pike with the corporate tax giveaways?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from the opposition member. But let's be clear: You're talking about input tax credits, which is something that is part of our value-added tax system. It is not a tax loophole. It is something that has been part of our initiation.

We are doing everything possible to close those loopholes and ensure that tax avoidance is curbed. We've been working closely with the federal government to that effect, and we will continue to be diligent in that initiative, because we are taking a balanced approach to our budget. We are looking at our fiscal impacts, and we are looking at making this also a very fair society. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No matter how you slice or dice it, it's a corporate tax loophole; it's a giveaway. Whatever the heck it is, it's making the rich richer in this province.

People are worried about the loss of good jobs in their own communities. They're worried about finding jobs for their kids and the growing cost of living for their families. When they look at their government, they see more of the same policies that leave them falling behind while those who need the help least seem to be getting all the handouts.

CEO salaries in the public sector keep growing, the government plows ahead with more corporate tax giveaways, and people fall further and further and further behind, like they've done for a decade under the Liberal government's leadership. It doesn't make sense. It hasn't made sense for a long time. We can do better than that, here in this province.

Is the Premier ready to take some basic steps towards fairness in this budget by capping CEO salaries and putting the brakes on the plan for more corporate tax giveaways?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are doing everything possible to make this a very balanced approach. We recognize how important it is to stimulate economic growth and to stimulate job creation, and we do that by providing incentives in the creation of those jobs and by providing for investment in Ontario. We want to attract more of that to come to this province, to create those jobs, not only for our skilled labour but also for our youth.

In the end, we also don't want to leave anybody behind. We recognize how important it is to support our fair society; we're taking those steps as well.

Three reports that you mentioned, that are so important in our budget: One is our jobs and prosperity agenda that you talked about. Another one is the Sheikh-Lankin report about reforming our social initiatives. And of

course, we have the Drummond report, which we're acting upon as well.

Altogether, we're taking initiatives necessary to provide growth while at the same time supporting our communities.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, I listened to your answers to my leader, and I'm not really sure where you got some of your facts. It certainly wasn't from any of the 125 meetings I've had with tradespeople across the province.

Minister, can you tell the House today what the cost is to the tradespeople of Ontario—because that's who is paying for this—to hire 150 new trades cops, complete with their vehicles, that the College of Trades has now approved? It's real simple: How much money for the trades cops?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Again, the rhetoric, Mr. Speaker. The College of Trades has been up and running now for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure the member from Prince Edward-Hastings does not want to be warned—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):—nor does the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke want to be warned.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The College of Trades has been up and running for a very short time. They've already made some great progress when it comes to reducing apprenticeship ratios, something that governments of all stripes have not done a great job doing. In fact, the member's party itself—when they were in power, do you know how many apprenticeship ratios they reduced? Zero, Mr. Speaker. The College of Trades has already reduced six apprenticeship ratios.

My advice to the member opposite—and I know he didn't like this College of Trades idea from the beginning: Give the college a chance. Give our skilled—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you, Minister. Well, that's really not much of an answer to my question.

But let's look at what's actually happening at the College of Trades. The college has been created without the knowledge or the permission of the tradespeople of Ontario. The membership tax is mandatory, and the increase is 676% higher than the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities fees. And if you don't pay it, you lose your licence.

The tradespeople have to pay for 150 trades cops, their vehicles, and probably a commissioner, for all I know, and even you don't know what the cost of that is—at least, you referred it. There is no transparency, and you

can't even tell me when the tradespeople will get to vote on their own board of directors.

Minister, you should be embarrassed by this boondoggle. We, on this side of the House, feel you can fix this by abolishing the College of Trades. Minister, will you do that today, and will you stand up today and apologize to the tradespeople of Ontario for this colossal tax grab?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a number of things that the member said there that were inaccurate, absolutely inaccurate. In particular, when it comes to the voluntary trades and losing their certificates of qualification: not the case; not factual at all.

But I think where the disrespect comes here, Mr. Speaker—it's disrespect from the party opposite for our hard-working men and women in the skilled trades. I don't know for the life of me why it's okay for audiologists in the province to have their own college but not for auto mechanics to have a college representing them. Why is it okay for dental hygienists to have their own college, but the PCs don't think that our skilled tradespeople—for instance, our agricultural equipment technicians—are capable of governing themselves?

What they want is a double standard. They're suggesting that our skilled tradespeople don't have the talent and the intelligence to be able to govern themselves. We disagree. We have confidence and respect for those individuals.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Yesterday, the former chief of staff to Ministers Duguid and Bentley testified at the justice committee that he had deleted all his emails relating to the Mississauga and Oakville gas plant cancellations—all of them.

1100

Premier, that looks like someone who is protecting the Liberal Party and not the people of Ontario. Will the Premier admit that it's wrong to protect the Liberal Party by destroying public records?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The government takes its obligation to produce documents very seriously. In fact, there is a committee of the Legislature which the member is part of, which is right now looking at the production of documents last year about the gas plant issue.

But what I find very strange is that when motions have come forward for the production of supplementary documents, government members have always supported more transparency, but when we went forward at the beginning of the committee hearings and offered the committee, through a motion, production of all documents

across government, including ministers' offices and the Premier's office, to my absolute astonishment, they—including that member—raised their hands in the committee and voted against it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, there are rules about the way records should be handled. The common records series says, "Records of Ontario cabinet ministers ... and their staff provide documentary evidence of the development of government policies and programs and form an important part of the historical record of government." That includes "records in electronic form." In fact, budget and planning files, which include "materials connected with budget planning and other ministry planning," should be kept for five years and then sent to the Archives of Ontario.

Is destroying evidence standard practice for Liberal political staff?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, you know, we expect from the official opposition those sorts of drive-by smears. I'm a little bit upset to hear it from the third party.

The fact of the matter is, as I've said before, I would like to let the committee do its work, but let's get into the weeds a little bit. We have had a series of requests from the committee for very specific documents. The Liberal members of the committee at the beginning went forward and put forward a motion for an across-government search, with a very wide timeline, for documents that were produced not only within the bureaucracy but within ministers' offices, the Premier's office and the Cabinet Office, and that member, along with opposition members, raised their hands and voted against it.

When it comes to transparency, when it comes to access to documents, I think that member has a lot of explaining to do.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Phil McNeely: Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister of Education. Many of my constituents in Ottawa–Orléans are new to Ontario. They come here looking for new opportunities and a better life. They also come to Ontario because they know that our schools are amongst the best in the world and that their kids will have access to a world-class education. I know that through many of our investments in our schools, our students are achieving great results and that more students are graduating than ever before.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister inform this House on how our investments in education are contributing to student success?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Ottawa–Orléans for his continuous advocacy for programs which help students graduate from high school.

I'm pleased to say that for the eighth straight year our high school graduation rate has grown. Since 2003, our graduation rate has increased by 15 percentage points, from 68% in 2003 to 83% in 2011-12. What that means is that over 115,000 more students have graduated from

Ontario high schools than would be the case if we hadn't put in place our student success programs, programs like the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Mr. Speaker, once again, through you, my question is to the Minister of Education. I'm very glad to hear that more of our students are graduating from high school.

It is also important to note that in order for our students to do well in school they must feel safe and accepted in their classroom. As many members know, today is the International Day of Pink. Today is a day where we wear pink to stand up against the destructive effects of bullying in schools. We've all read in the last 24 hours about a young lady from the east coast, where the bullies followed her to her next school, and she took her life. When our students don't feel safe, they do not do well in their studies.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Education, can the minister please inform this House on the work that is being done to ensure that our students can succeed in a safe and inclusive environment?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The member is absolutely right. When students are bullied, the consequences are often very tragic. If students are going to succeed in school, they need to be safe. Every student has the right to feel safe and accepted at school. If students don't feel safe, they can't do their best. That's why we're committed to building a safe, inclusive environment in our classrooms. I'm proud to say that our government passed the Accepting Schools Act last year to make sure that every school must take measures to prevent bullying and support students who come from all sorts of different, diverse backgrounds, and to support the students who want to work by events like pink day to support other students and to take a stand against bullying in our schools.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. At the justice committee yesterday we had our most revealing day yet. Your deputy energy minister corroborated the testimony of the OPA, who stated that the government knew there would be massive costs to the Oakville relocation in addition to the \$40 million you claim. He swore to the justice committee that he told the minister the Oakville cancellation would cost hundreds of millions of dollars more than the \$40-million figure.

Premier, you've known this for months—months—yet you sit there and pretend you didn't. Will you drop the act and tell us the total cost of the gas plant scandal and who ordered the documents to be withheld?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think members are aware that we have asked the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, to examine the issue. It is my understanding, through a letter that I received from him, that the Auditor General will be making his report public next

week. That will be an opportunity for the members of the opposition, members of this party or government, to take a look at the Auditor General's report. It's certainly within the power of the committee that has been struck to examine that report in detail and in fact, if they so desire, call the Auditor General before it.

In terms of document production, we have undertaken in good faith to provide the committee with all documents it wants, but again, I remind members of this House that the government took the initiative to come forward and offer a government-wide search of relevant documents far beyond anything that had been asked, and that member and his colleagues voted against it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It was also revealed that the Liberal staffers will go to any extreme to keep us from getting to the facts. Several times yesterday I asked Craig MacLennan, the energy minister's chief of staff, about a \$1.4-billion Oakville price tag that he was very concerned with. He repeatedly swore under oath that he had no idea what I was referring to until I showed him the urgent document he wrote. Then, eureka, he remembered it. We got him red-handed.

Last week, David Livingston, the former Premier's chief of staff, either didn't know or couldn't remember 22 times in that short testimony. Let's remember that he was a \$367,000-a-year bureaucrat. Premier, do you really think this type of behaviour is acceptable, or is amnesia a prerequisite for your job in the Liberal government?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader?

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Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the drive-by smears continue. Individuals are coming forward before the committee. These are witnesses who are being called by the—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: These are witnesses who are being called by the Progressive Conservative Party. They are coming forward. They are being asked questions—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Cambridge, second time.

Hon. John Milloy: —related to a long time frame. They are answering under oath to the best of their ability.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about Mr. MacLennan's testimony, the honourable member spoke about documents. Perhaps we should review what he told the committee about documents. He said, "Ultimately, legal counsel, as I understand it, advised that it would be difficult to release these documents while negotiations were still under way. Ultimately, as I understood it, the minister accepted that legal advice."

Mr. Speaker, as has been discussed in this chamber on many occasions, the former minister and his staff tried to find a balance between the competing interests of the

public and the requests of the committee, and that became very clear yesterday.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question this morning is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The Ring of Fire presents endless opportunities for northern Ontario and the province; however, instead of seeing development and job creation, the past years of Liberal government have been marked by job losses in the north. Look no further than Xstrata in Timmins to see that we are losing good, value-added jobs and crippling our workforce for years to come.

Will this government start focusing on policies that create jobs in northern Ontario so the province can capitalize on what the Ring of Fire has to offer?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question. It's a good one in that we are, of course, very committed to seeing job creation continue in northern Ontario. I certainly note you did not reference the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., which is one of the great job creators in northern Ontario, one that would be a benefit to your riding as well.

May I say, there's lots to talk about here, Mr. Speaker, but the province remains very committed to, certainly, sound strategic development in the Ring of Fire, perhaps one of the most exciting economic development opportunities in the province that we've seen in over 100 years. We continue to move forward with that project as well as many other opportunities we see in both the mining and the forestry sector in northern Ontario.

Again, we could discuss this all day in terms of those opportunities. We're seeing the forestry industry return in northern Ontario. We're seeing opportunities, particularly with the purchase of the mill in Terrace Bay, the opportunities that have been there in the forestry sector as well as in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question again is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In the Ontario Mining Act, it is stated that companies must ask for an exemption to ship resources outside of the country. But our competitors come from other provinces, provinces like Manitoba, like Quebec, whose price of electricity is half that of ours in Ontario.

If this government is serious about stimulating the economy and creating new jobs, will they commit to supporting the refining of minerals and ores in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly looking forward to debating the member's private member's bill tomorrow afternoon. We are, obviously, always looking for value-added opportunities in the mining sector—why we're excited about setting up a diamond-processing facility in Sudbury, Ontario; why we're working, obviously, in terms of the opportunities you see for the processing facility that may be there with the Ring of Fire in terms of Capreol.

But let me tell you, you're walking on very dangerous ground here, may I say, and I think the member knows that. He knows that indeed the amount of processing materials that come in from outside the province into the province of Ontario and that provide employment for hundreds, if not thousands, of people would be threatened if indeed the member moved forward with that legislation.

Interjection.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Oh yes, it would. So let's agree that we will have a good, thorough debate tomorrow afternoon and one where indeed I hope that members of the House recognize that this is dangerous ground you're on. Having said that, there is nothing that's more important, that wants to see the value-added opportunities in the mining sector, let alone the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Our government is making record investments in public transit, and two of these major transit projects go through my riding of York South–Weston.

Residents and businesses that have been waiting for years for rapid transit on Eglinton—ever since the original subway was cancelled in 1995—were pleased, Minister, to see you on the construction site yesterday and to know that the work is progressing.

However, another neighbourhood in my riding, Weston, where construction for the GO expansion and the UP Express is in full swing, has brought forth serious concerns about extended construction work hours. These are not acceptable to the community.

Speaker, through you to the minister, I ask how we can address these concerns.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The Eglinton crosstown line—I really want to commend the member from York South–Weston on it, because she has been one of the biggest advocates for that. Very few people who have sat in this House have been such unqualified advocates for transit and transportation investments.

This is a \$4.9-billion project. It is the largest single transit project in 50 years in Ontario—this one project alone. It is one of seven projects that are now under way of 15 under the Big Move. By 2021, 53 million people will be riding that line. This is a remarkable step forward in transit investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the minister: In a public meeting held yesterday, my constituents expressed serious concerns with the accelerated construction schedule being proposed for spring and summer along the Weston corridor. Crews working every day from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m. and from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekends all through the spring and summer is really extremely disruptive to the quality

of life of the residents, especially in the immediate surrounding area. This is not acceptable to the community.

Speaker, through you to the minister: How are we going to make sure these concerns are addressed?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member raises a very good point. I hopefully would like to give her a bit of comfort on that. First, the work in this area is limited to the area of King between John and Church Streets, and that will focus on the Weston tunnel excavation.

MetroLinx is moving forward on this so that the road can be completed for the school year, and the work is being done four metres underground. We anticipate that the noise levels will be what they are, Mr. Speaker, or lower than they are right now.

The proposal is to have them run between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. Monday to Friday and 7 to 7 on Saturdays, and only on Sundays if necessary for limited amounts of time.

I would like to commit to the member that I will review this construction schedule with her and her constituents to ensure that we mitigate anything, and I'm quite prepared to work with her to achieve adjustments, if necessary.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, it's almost two years to the date that the first question was asked in this House about why names had disappeared from the sunshine list of senior executives working at Ornge. Two years later, we look at the sunshine list, and there are still senior executives missing from the sunshine list. Bruce Farr, the acting operations manager; Jim Feeley, the VP of aviation—79 employees being paid in excess of \$7 million are nowhere to be seen on the sunshine list.

I'd like to know from the Premier: Is this her idea of full disclosure? Is this her idea of transparency? Why are these people not listed on the sunshine list?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is almost two years, and what a two years it has been, Speaker. Ornge is a much, much stronger organization now: new leadership, new protocols—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —focused on patient care. It is a—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just want to make sure you heard that. The member from Nepean–Carleton, come to order.

Carry on.

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to take this opportunity, Speaker—we have paramedics in the House, and I want to focus on saying thank you to the front-line

staff at Ornge, who have worked so hard, despite difficult times.

I look forward to the supplementary, but I have directed that Ornge must comply with the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. That's why I made sure it was in the new performance agreement that has been in place for over a year. When the new board was appointed at Ornge, one of their directions was to wind down the for-profit companies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, obviously, the minister has been as ineffective in the last few months as she was for the last two years, because there continue to be three for-profit companies that are employing 79 employees, none of whom have been able to be convinced to allow their names to be disclosed for the salary disclosure that we in this House were promised by the minister.

I would like to know, from the minister: Why are we still faced with a list of 79 employees who are being paid more than \$7.5 million of taxpayers' money? We have no idea who they are. Why has this organization not complied with the directive the minister told us here that she has given them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I was saying, Ornge is winding down those for-profit entities as quickly as is responsible to do so. I am sure the member opposite would not want Ornge to do anything that was not responsible.

Speaker, the member is correct. There are currently active for-profit entities that employ some of Ornge's pilots and management. They do not fall under the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. However, they are posting publicly the positions and salaries for all of those who are not covered by the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act.

I would say that if the member opposite wants to see progress at Ornge, he should pass the legislation, get it to committee, and let's continue the job that has already been well started at Ornge.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier likes to describe the crisis in manufacturing in Ontario as a myth. Maybe she hasn't heard the one about the emperor's new clothes. That myth is about what happens when a leader ignores the obvious.

One thing is very obvious, Speaker, to 5,000 workers and their families in southwestern Ontario: They've lost good-paying manufacturing jobs over the last year.

When will the Premier face the facts and deal with manufacturing job losses in London and across the southwest?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the leader of the third party. The reality is that important investments that this government is making, like the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, which was approved and passed in this Legislature last fall—it's

such an important program to address precisely the issue that the leader of the third party is talking about.

When we think of the nearly 400,000 jobs that have been created since June 2009, since the bottom of the recession, many of those jobs were created in the manufacturing sector as well, and many of those jobs were created in southwestern Ontario.

We are focused on continuing to find new supports, better supports, to make sure that this important sector in Ontario, which contributed so much to our economy and our society—that we continue to invest in making sure that it continues to thrive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, over the last 10 years of Liberal reign, 18,000 manufacturing jobs in southwestern Ontario have disappeared. London now has the third-highest unemployment rate in the country. London workers are reeling from manufacturing job losses at Electro-Motive, Diamond Aircraft, and the list goes on and on and on. London families don't want to hear bed-time stories. They want to see a jobs strategy that actually works.

When will the Premier take some real action to protect and create good-paying manufacturing jobs in London, in southwestern Ontario and, in fact, across this province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, it's important, I think, that we remind ourselves of the success that is going on in this province. In fact, Ontario, including in manufacturing, is leading in many sectors. I just want to say that, for example, our auto sector is producing more vehicles in this province than any other subnational jurisdiction in North America. We have the fastest-growing green energy sector in North America as well. We have the best-rated banks in the world. We have the second-largest financial services sector in North America, next to New York. We are the mining finance capital of the world. We are in the top three in North America in terms of the film industry as well. And importantly, we have Canada's largest food processing industry.

In the manufacturing sector, there's work to be done, of course. The recession hit hard; it hurt this sector badly. We're working hard to make sure that it continues to thrive.

TOURISM

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Supporting local festivals and cultural events is very important. In my riding of Brampton West and all across Peel region, we are fortunate to have many cultural celebrations. The government's Celebrate Ontario program is an important tool that helps local community groups run programs and events and showcase their culture and heritage. It has helped with events like Carabram and the Mosaic South Asian heritage festival, which were wildly popular and well-attended events in Peel. Showcasing the diversity and heritage of Ontarians not only makes

Ontario a popular tourist destination, but it also generates business for the local economy.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us how the Celebrate Ontario program benefits Ontarians?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much to the honourable member for Brampton West for asking.

Celebrate Ontario is a great program in my ministry. It's an important program, because it pulls people together. It attracts tourists; it creates jobs. Every year, festivals generate more than 22,000 jobs in this province. This year, through Celebrate Ontario, our government is providing support to 203 events.

Let me give you examples: Celebrations like the upcoming Tall Ships 1812 Tour will have \$450 million in visitor spending while drawing 1.2 million attendees, including 500,000 tourists.

Local festivals and events make Ontario a great travel destination and encourage Ontarians and visitors to explore and experience all our province has to offer.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Easy does it, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Supplementary?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: [*Inaudible*] Ontario, which will generate local business and help create jobs. I heard that our government also enhanced the blockbuster category of Celebrate Ontario, allowing London to host the 2013 International Skating Union World Figure Skating Championships in March, as well as Ottawa's 2013 International Ice Hockey Federation world women's championship, which just ended yesterday.

Can the minister indicate what else the government has done for festivals and events in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: That was a very good question.

I want to congratulate the Canadian women's hockey team, which won a silver medal in Ottawa last night. I am sure the next time around, they will get a gold medal.

I am proud to say that since 2003, our government has invested over \$260 million to support more than 4,600 festivals and events across Ontario. Since 2007, Celebrate Ontario has helped enhance close to 1,000 festivals, supporting our priorities to help grow the economy and create jobs.

Our government is dedicated to supporting Ontario's festivals and events through programs like Celebrate Ontario, and we will continue to do that.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I want to read something you said in question period yesterday; it intrigued me. This was in response to the \$63-million price tag on retirement gratuities with the OSSTF. You said, "The savings that was found, \$1.8 billion, is the same money that was saved at the end of this contract."

Well, I think this member, of course, as Premier, knows that the Ontario PC caucus has been calling for an

across-the-board legislated wage freeze that would be far more comprehensive than what they're doing, and that would save \$2 billion. She's now trying to tell us she spent \$63 million more but she has \$1.8 billion in savings. Speaker, I know math scores are down in this province, but it appears that she has taken it to a new low in her office.

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What I'd like to ask the Premier is, can you stand up and give us a detailed explanation right here, right now, on where you found those \$1.8 billion in savings, or is it just like the power plants that are costing \$40 million?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very happy to respond to this question, because I think what's absolutely clear in all of this is that while the party opposite has an attitude which—I think one of the members, the other day, in question period, referred to teachers as terrorists. That is totally unacceptable, and we have a very different attitude. We think teachers are our front-line professionals, and we make absolutely—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Carry on.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We make absolutely no apologies for working with our front-line professionals to come to an agreement. We actually think working with our teachers to come to an agreement and having peace in the schools and extracurriculars is a good thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I heard her make an accusation about the member from Thornhill, but she did not tell me what \$1.8 billion of savings was added up from, because there aren't, Speaker. We know this deal has cost us an extra—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I would appreciate it if everyone got a little softer.

Please finish.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If this government actually knew the details of their own agreement, they'd be able to table in this chamber what that cost. If they're talking about \$1.8 billion in savings, this side of the House wants to know why it hasn't been applied to the debt and the deficit. We want to know why it has not been applied to our front-line classrooms for textbooks, technology and the portables where we see our kids in suburban communities right across this province.

So I ask this minister one more time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Education.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to remind the member that when I stand, you sit.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Pardon me? I can't hear you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You can't hear me because you were talking.

Minister.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, I'd be delighted to explain how we got over \$1.8 billion in savings. In fact, Minister Duncan, when he was Minister of Finance, I believe, explained it in quite a bit of detail. In the 2012-13 fiscal year, which we are just completing, there was over a quarter of a billion dollars in operating savings. In the fiscal year that we are about to begin, there is over half a billion in savings. There are also ongoing fiscal savings of \$1.1 billion in terms of long-term liability. So when you add it all up, there in fact is \$1.8 billion in savings. And just as there was \$1.8 billion in savings in January, there are \$1.8 billion in March.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Sant   et des Soins de longue dur  e. Residents in Kingston are very concerned about the fact that St. Mary's hospital is being planned as a P3, a private-public partnership—so concerned, in fact, that this weekend they are holding an unofficial by-election on the issue.

P3s have been shown by the Auditor General to waste taxpayers' money, as they transfer responsibility for a public hospital to a for-profit corporation with no accountability, with no oversight.

Financial experts have said that this P3 is going to cost \$100 million more—\$100 million that should be spent on improving patient care, Mr. Speaker, but the minister says that it is cheaper. Why, then, has the minister refused to release any of the supporting documents that make the case for this P3, and how can the minister justify ignoring the voices of the local residents of Kingston in justifying this P3?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure you that the residents of Kingston are delighted at the investments that are being made in hospital infrastructure, and I applaud the member from Kingston and the Islands, who has been relentless in his advocacy for capital projects in his riding.

The alternate financing plan that is building hospitals across this province is delivering hospitals on budget and on time. We simply would not have been able to replace our hospital infrastructure if we had used traditional methods of financing. We are getting very good value for money. We're getting projects built. They're coming in under budget and on time. The result is, we have a highly renewed hospital infrastructure across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Prue: I have five guests here today to observe the introduction of a bill later today. My guests are Daryl Chezzi, Sean Hamilton, Amanda Barchard, Bruce Katkin and Julius Varga. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Thank you for being here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VIMY RIDGE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Robert Bailey: I stand today to recognize the 96th anniversary of the Canadian Corps assault on the German troops occupying Vimy, France, between April 9 and April 12, 1917. In capturing that critical foothold in northern France, soldiers from all four divisions of the Canadian military corps stood side by side for the first time as a nation, united, at one. In doing so, 3,598 young Canadians made that ultimate sacrifice with their lives, and another 7,000 returned wounded from that battle.

Vimy Ridge stands as a memorial in perpetuity to those 11,285 Canadian soldiers who fought and were killed in France during the First World War and have no known grave. In 2011, I was fortunate enough to join a group of 1st Hussars from Sarnia and London to visit the memorial at Vimy Ridge, Juno Beach and the Commonwealth cemeteries in Europe. Together, we travelled to those sites to honour our brave soldiers, who have selflessly fought for our country with the hope that theirs would be the last generation to face the violence and the atrocities of war.

I ask that today, as we tend to the business of our individual lives, each of us takes time to reflect upon that past service and sacrifice of our fellow Canadians at Vimy Ridge and in all conflicts across the globe.

RURAL AGRICULTURE INNOVATION NETWORK

Mr. Michael Mantha: The Rural Agri-Innovation Network, or RAIN, is holding sessions across many communities in Algoma-Manitowlin between April 18 and May 7 that will help strengthen the agricultural sector in northern Ontario.

RAIN is a collaborative organization for improved producer success and business growth in the agricultural sector. This valuable organization will improve the capacity of Algoma producers for rural-based crops and commodities and create value-added products and services. Through these sessions that will be held in Echo Bay, Huron Shores, Prince township and St. Joseph Island, RAIN will gain input from local community members so that they can effectively develop market opportunities, get access to information, and research Algoma-specific needs and opportunities.

Northern Ontario is not only a leader in primary sector industry, it has positioned itself to become a knowledge-based economy, building on its traditional strengths and expanding in the areas of innovation and collaboration. Northern agriculture is important to the health, economic viability and diversity of northern communities. RAIN is pursuing research that will develop and support the growth and sustainability of the industry so that the

northern Ontario agricultural sector will be better able to thrive and realize its full potential.

I applaud the efforts of this organization and encourage community members to attend these sessions so that research can be properly tailored to the needs of local producers and agricultural communities can be strengthened through innovative practices.

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONOR AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Soo Wong: I would like to take the time today to recognize April 22 to 28 as National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week 2013. At this moment, more than 1,500 people are waiting for a life-saving organ and tissue transplant in Ontario. One person on this list dies every three days because the organ they need is not available, but the organs of just one person can save up to eight lives.

While Ontario's organ and tissue donation registration is 22%, Toronto's registration is 14%. Scarborough falls well below this number, at a mere 10%. For this reason, the Scarborough Gift of Life Association was formed in September 2012. The members and the volunteers of this association live in Scarborough, and many have personal connections or interests in organ and tissue donations. They are local community donors, recipients, neighbours, advocates, friends, partners and supporters, including my constituent Mohan Bissoondial, who is a friend as well as an organ recipient and a founder of the Scarborough Gift of Life Association.

Mohan and his team have increased the registration rate for organ and tissue donation in Scarborough, working in partnership with Trillium Gift of Life. The Trillium Gift of Life network designates April as Be a Donor month.

I want to applaud the association for all their hard work and encourage each one of us here in the House and in the community to be a donor.

A.O. SMITH

Mr. Ted Arnott: Once again, I wish to update the House on the situation in Fergus related to the A.O. Smith, formerly GSW, manufacturing plant closure.

Upon hearing the news, I immediately reached out to township of Centre Wellington officials, company and union representatives, the Premier's office, the offices of the Ministers of Economic Development and Training, and many others. I also joined Mayor Joanne Ross-Zuj to visit the plant on April 4, the day after the announcement.

The Premier and the Minister of Training returned my calls to their offices. I asked both of them in turn to call the mayor, and they did, which I appreciate. However, the government's response to date, as a whole, has been less than satisfactory. Yesterday in this House, the Minister of Economic Development claimed during question period that an action centre had been "opened" to respond to the crisis.

Mr. Speaker, as of yesterday, that was not true. In fact, when I contacted the company yesterday to double-check, I was told that the company hasn't yet heard from the government. The minister needs to correct his record in this House.

The 350 A.O. Smith workers need a compassionate community response in the first instance, and this is happening in our community right now. But they need the support of the provincial government as well.

I call upon the Minister of Training to immediately activate the Second Career program and other relevant training programs and give my constituents fair consideration to help them with their retraining needs. Secondly, I call upon the Minister of Economic Development to immediately reach out to the township of Centre Wellington, offering all available resources to support our township, county and chamber of commerce's efforts to create new jobs in our community to replace the ones that we will be losing on July 1, Canada Day.

Working together, we will meet this challenge head on, support our neighbours and continue to reach out to the promise of the future.

RON SCHLEGEL

Ms. Catherine Fife: This past weekend I had the distinct pleasure of attending the mayors' dinner in support of the Working Centre in Kitchener-Waterloo. This event celebrates individuals who have made outstanding contributions to our community. It is worth noting that the Working Centre itself deserves celebrating as it is a progressive model of social entrepreneurship, generosity and compassion and for many years has been the social net that catches our most vulnerable citizens when government institutions have failed them.

This year, the Working Centre honoured and celebrated the life, work and vision of citizen Ron Schlegel. Mr. Schlegel is a hugely influential volunteer, businessperson and academic in Kitchener-Waterloo. Perhaps most importantly, we all celebrated his vision of a society as a village. Mr. Schlegel believes that each of us, using our talents and working with each other, can achieve a common goal of building a better community. His vision of a village informed his academic work on aging and his successful retirement communities and long-term-care facilities, where dignity, nutrition and engagement are at the centre of senior health.

In his work as a faculty member at the University of Waterloo, Mr. Schlegel helped establish the health sciences and gerontology department. His ongoing commitment to promote new and better ways of providing service for older adults led to the founding of the Schlegel-University of Waterloo Research Institute for Aging in 2005, along with the Centre for Applied Health Research and the Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program.

Mr. Schlegel has been described as a visionary who has built his philanthropy into each of his business models. Indeed, we are very fortunate to have not only

Mr. Schlegel recognized as a leader, but the Working Centre of Kitchener–Waterloo to serve the citizens of the great riding of Kitchener–Waterloo.

LEDBURY PARK ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Mr. Mike Colle: First of all, I'm proud that so many members of the House today are wearing pink for international pink day in solidarity with the young lady who died in Halifax, Rehtaeh Parsons. I'm just reflecting on that before I talk about my students at Ledbury Park elementary school.

Ledbury Park is an amazing school in my riding. Mr. Speaker, you would know this, as a former educator. They became the winners of the Canadian National Mathematics League contest—that's right across Canada. The students at Ledbury Park placed third overall and first among all public schools. That's quite an achievement.

1510

About 200 private and public schools competed in this rigorous time test of mathematical and problem-solving skills. The students had to solve 35 difficult questions in 30 minutes. Cedric, a top-ranked grade 8 student at Ledbury, has been invited to attend the math league finals competition in August at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California.

I'm very proud of Ledbury Park school—the staff, principals, parents and students—for doing so well in this national mathematics league contest. Congratulations to all at Ledbury Park. You deserve a real clap for your achievements.

ROBERT ELGIE

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would like to take this time to acknowledge the passing of Robert Elgie, who served as a member of this Legislature from 1977 to 1985. He was a cabinet minister in the Progressive Conservative governments of Bill Davis and Frank Miller.

Bob was a very ambitious and dedicated man, having received a law degree and practised medicine as a neurosurgeon prior to his pursuing his political career. Even later in life, Bob was an active community member, having been appointed as chair of the Ontario Greenbelt Council in the summer of 2005.

I knew Bob personally as he was also a constituent of mine. He was well known in my riding of York–Simcoe as he was a keen supporter of many activities and events in the community. He would frequently attend church dinners and community fairs and accompany his grandchildren to events.

Bob was a great supporter and a friend, always someone that could be counted on for advice or support in my role as the MPP. Our province has lost a great man and so has our community of Georgina. I would like to offer my condolences to his wife, Nancy, and their five children and grandchildren.

ROUGE VALLEY HEALTH, AJAX–PICKERING

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today to bring the assembly's attention to a part of my riding that I hold very near and dear. Rouge Valley Health, the Ajax–Pickering site, has made tremendous improvements over the past decade and several years as well to better serve our rapidly expanding community. In addition to the \$100-million, 140,000-square-foot expansion, the Ajax–Pickering site has invested in innovative and high-tech services to continually improve the access and quality of patient care for the residents of Ajax–Pickering and the entire Durham area.

Patients now have world-renowned cardiac care, follow-up appointments via Skype, prehab services, demonstrative YouTube videos, a \$5-million MRI unit, a new ambulatory care unit and a substantial increase in bed space. Decreasing wait times, increasing services and diversifying the specialties of our physicians and numerous specialty surgeons are key components in the future vision of our hospital.

It is an ongoing saga as we continue to care for and provide higher levels of health care locally at the Ajax–Pickering hospital. We congratulate the staff, who continue to excel, and that certainly includes our very special associate chief of staff, Dr. Romas Stas.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The College of Trades is an expensive Liberal bureaucracy supported by the NDP. It is imposing new taxes on tradespeople and small businesses. They just want to feed their families, not Liberal bureaucracies. If the Premier would just have a conversation with my constituents, she would know that. But her government is choosing not to listen.

They are not listening to Linda and Sara, two constituents from Stratford who recently wrote to me. Sara, a licensed hairstylist, has been asked to pay \$120 a year. To add insult to injury, she will have to pay tax on top of that tax. Sara works at a long-term-care facility. I quote from the letter: "They cannot and will not raise their rates to seniors on fixed incomes." Where will Sara find the extra money?

The government is not listening to Bruce, an electrician from Listowel. He writes, "I cannot see how this new tax will benefit anyone."

They're not listening to Rob, who owns a small business in Stratford. He wrote to me, "You add this to the new WSIB rules, and it makes you wonder why you would want to be in Ontario as a business."

I have spoken up for my constituents many times on this issue. I've taken part in a forum with the Stratford home builders. I've written many letters, most recently to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, asking him to take back his unfair fees. Just last week, we welcomed Garfield Dunlop to Mitchell, where he spoke to about 25 tradespeople who want no part of this Liberal bureaucracy.

My constituents know the government is not listening to them. They know the Liberals are failing them.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING EMPLOYEES' TIPS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DU POURBOIRE DES EMPLOYÉS

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to tips and other gratuities / Projet de loi 49, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les pourboires et autres gratifications.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Prue: The bill prohibits employers from taking any portion of an employee's tips or other gratuities.

POOLED REGISTERED PENSION PLANS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES RÉGIMES DE PENSION AGRÉES COLLECTIFS

Mrs. Munro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to require the introduction of legislation to allow for pooled registered pension plans / Projet de loi 50, Loi exigeant la présentation d'un projet de loi afin d'autoriser les régimes de pension agréés collectifs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Julia Munro: This bill requires the Minister of Labour to introduce a bill in the assembly to allow for pooled registered pension plans.

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Mrs. Meilleur moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 51, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2013 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I will make my statement during ministers' statements.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

COMMUNITY SAFETY SÉCURITÉ COMMUNAUTAIRE

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to encourage my colleagues in this House to support the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2013.

The act, if passed, will repeal and replace the Public Works Protection Act, ensuring we strike the right balance between protecting Ontario's courthouses, electricity generating plants and nuclear facilities, and respecting the civil rights of the people of this province.

La loi actuelle a été adoptée au début de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale afin de protéger les centrales électriques de la province, ses barrages, ses ponts et autres infrastructures publiques essentielles contre le sabotage.

Concerns were raised about whether the PWPA, which became law in 1939, is too broad and outdated. In response to these concerns, the government asked the Honourable Roy McMurtry, a former Ontario Chief Justice, to review the legislation. In his report, Judge McMurtry recommended its repeal and replacement.

The new legislation, the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2013, is more modern and focused on necessary security at courthouses, nuclear facilities and large electricity generating facilities. It also includes a more transparent process on how we go about protecting key infrastructure in this province.

The PWPA is only used in limited circumstances. It is used daily to provide security for courts, nuclear facilities and certain electricity generating plants. That's where the new legislation is focused. In December 2010, the Ombudsman produced a report that raised important questions about how the PWPA works and how it was used at the time of the G20 summit in Toronto earlier that year.

In light of both the Ombudsman's and the McMurtry reports, we are repealing the PWPA.

Aux fins de l'élaboration du projet de loi, le gouvernement a organisé des consultations à grande échelle afin de déterminer les mesures qu'il faudrait prendre pour préserver la sécurité si la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics était abrogée. Nous avons sollicité les commentaires et conseils d'exploitants d'installations nucléaires et d'organes de réglementation du secteur, de producteurs d'électricité, de partenaires de la justice et de municipalités. Nous avons également consulté des défenseurs des libertés civiles pour être sûrs d'atteindre un bon équilibre entre les besoins de sécurité et la protection des libertés civiles.

Nous proposons à nouveau la loi après la prorogation de l'Assemblée législative l'an passé. La loi proposée vient compléter le projet de loi original en incorporant les commentaires que nous avons reçus. Nous avons tenu compte des commentaires reçus des intervenants pendant les auditions publiques et l'examen du projet de loi par le Comité permanent de la justice, surtout en ce qui concerne les accommodements religieux dans les palais de justice.

The proposed legislation has achieved that delicate balance and generated a broad consensus among all key stakeholders. The proposed legislation will do the following three things: repeal the Public Works Protection Act; set out a legislative amendment to the Police Services Act to address court security; and set out stand-alone legislation respecting security and prescribed electricity generating and nuclear facilities.

The proposed legislation is aligned with the current powers granted to court security guards under the PWPA. The legislation will provide security staff with the ability to, where reasonable:

- require any person entering or inside a courthouse to identify himself or herself and provide information to assess their security risk;

- search, without a warrant, any person, property or vehicle entering or attempting to enter premises where court proceedings are conducted; and

- search, without a warrant and using reasonable force if necessary, any person who is in custody where court proceedings are conducted or who is being transported to or from such premises, or any property in the custody/care of that person.

I would like to emphasize that the legislation does not compel a person entering or attempting to enter a courthouse to submit to a search, identify himself or herself, or provide information. A member of the public can simply walk away. However, if they persist in entering the courthouse after refusing to provide information or submit to a search, court security personnel can refuse entry and/or demand that the person leave the premises, and use reasonable force, if necessary, to exclude or remove the person. If a person continues to try to enter and/or refuses to leave, they could be arrested.

In terms of other facilities, we've narrowed the list of public works to electricity generating and nuclear facil-

ities. The legislation will apply to prescribed electricity-generating facilities and prescribed nuclear facilities. The act designates security personnel at these facilities as peace officers with the power to require any person who wishes to enter or is on the premises to produce identification and provide information for the purposes of assessing the person's security risk, and search any person, property or vehicle entering or on the premises.

Comme les dispositions applicables à la sécurité des tribunaux, la loi n'oblige pas une personne à se soumettre à la fouille, à produire une pièce d'identité ou à fournir des renseignements. Elle peut décider de s'en aller.

Toutefois, si la personne insiste pour pénétrer dans les lieux après avoir refusé de fournir des renseignements ou de subir une fouille, le personnel de sécurité peut refuser de lui permettre de pénétrer dans les lieux ou lui ordonner de quitter les lieux, et employer au besoin la force raisonnable pour l'empêcher d'y pénétrer ou la faire sortir. Si la personne continue d'essayer de pénétrer dans les lieux ou de refuser de quitter les lieux, elle peut être arrêtée.

It is important to note that this act covers very limited categories of infrastructure. Adding additional categories of infrastructure will require amendments to the act, not just a new regulation. It would, therefore, be open to debate in the House. The process for changing an act is very transparent and open, and the content of any proposed amendments would be subject to public debate.

There is one important aspect of the PWPA that we have not replicated. The PWPA gives guards the authority to exercise their powers in the "approaches" to public works. The "approach" to a facility was a concern for Judge McMurtry and civil liberties groups, because it is vague and hard to define. Under our proposal, guards could exercise the specified powers only on the premises. These powers would not apply off the premises. Since the "approach" falls outside the premises of the nuclear facility, any security issues should be addressed in partnership with the police of the jurisdiction.

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Pour terminer, j'aimerais ajouter que les habitants de l'Ontario valorisent et célèbrent les droits de la personne et les libertés civiles. Notre gouvernement est bien conscient de sa responsabilité à assurer la protection des tribunaux et de l'infrastructure essentielle.

We must always balance the need for security with respect for civil liberties like the freedom of assembly and the principles of an open and transparent justice system. I believe that this legislation does indeed strike that necessary balance.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues in the House to support this legislation.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

Hon. Liz Sandals: Today I am pleased to stand in recognition of International Day of Pink. The International Day of Pink was started a few years ago when a young man in 9th grade was bullied for wearing a pink

shirt in a Nova Scotia high school. Two other young men at the school saw what happened and took action: They bought pink shirts and handed them out to friends to wear to school. To their surprise, hundreds of students wore pink to show support for the bullied student. By doing so, those students demonstrated the importance of not being a bystander to bullying. They stood up against bullying and showed that it would not be tolerated at their school.

I want to thank all the members who are wearing pink today in support of this great cause to raise awareness of the harmful effects of bullying and to help put a stop to bullying in our schools. I would also like to recognize all of our young people who have organized pink shirt days in their schools across Ontario today. Together, we are part of one voice that says that we will not tolerate bullying, discrimination or hatred in our society.

Mr. Speaker, any student can be bullied at any time, at any age. In fact, according to one study, about 29% of Ontario students report being bullied while at school. Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or questioning are too often the target of homophobia at school. Sadly, bullying can lead to intense feelings of loneliness and isolation.

For some, the pain of bullying and depression can even lead to tragic consequences, including suicide. We think of the young student in New Brunswick, 17-year-old Rehtaeh Parsons, who took his own—

Interjection: Halifax.

Hon. Liz Sandals: In Halifax?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Yes, in Halifax.

Hon. Liz Sandals: In Halifax, sorry, who took his own life this week. Once again, we—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Her.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm sorry; I'm trying to decipher the notes here—her life in Halifax. So often we see that, when a student doesn't have a place to turn, that can become the ultimate consequence.

Speaker, we know that for our students to do well in school, they must feel safe. For this reason, I am proud that our government passed the Accepting Schools Act last year as part of our comprehensive action plan for accepting schools. Ontario school boards must now take preventive measures against bullying and support students who want to promote understanding and respect for all.

We need the whole school and the entire community involved in the fight against bullying and discrimination. That's why it's important that our schools work with parents, students and staff in developing policies to prevent bullying in our classrooms.

As a complement to our efforts on accepting schools, our government is also expanding supports for children and youth with mental health issues. Through Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, we are hiring new mental health workers across the province to make sure mental health services are available where and when they are needed most.

We're also partnering with Kids Help Phone so that our young people have access to 24/7 telephone- and

Web-based professional counselling services, because we know that when kids are depressed, when they're upset, when they're bothered by bullying, they often feel like they have no place to turn. If they can access a service like Kids Help Phone and get professional advice at the end of the phone, that's also often what can lead them to feel that somewhere there's a person who is willing to listen to them.

Today, Speaker, we are united in our stance against bullying. We're united in our belief that every child should have a safe, inclusive and accepting school environment where they can reach their full potential. Once again, I thank all members today for their support of International Day of Pink.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries?

Responses. The member from—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. That's me.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond today to the statement by the Minister of Community Safety. I thought I was having a flashback when she said, "introducing a bill for the first time," because it's not actually for the first time. This bill came before this House last year. The bill went through second reading and committee, and it was ready. It would be proclaimed today had the government not decided that we needed a holiday, we needed a little break, and prorogued the House and let all those bills die. Had we not had that prorogation, this bill would be implemented and we'd be acting upon it as we speak, as opposed to bringing it back to the Legislature for a new introduction and further debate.

The minister did make a passing reference—just a passing reference—to the G20 in her statement. Folks, let's be very, very clear. I don't think anybody over there knew what the Public Works Protection Act was until the G20. And then it was used so inappropriately during that meeting of world leaders that all of a sudden somebody had to stand up and take notice and say, "Whoa, we're taking a sledgehammer instead of a fly swatter to take care of a small problem. We're using the Public Works Protection Act." It turned out to be the wrong kind of enforcement that was passed behind closed doors by the cabinet without this Legislature even being made aware of it, even though this Legislature was sitting at the time that decision was made. So I don't think we should lose sight of the fact as to why this change was brought forward.

Having said that, I want to be fair: The change is long overdue. The Public Works Protection Act dates back to the War Measures Act of 1939, so it requires some upgrading. But the shame of it is that something as serious as the wrongful use of it during the G20 was what got the government's attention.

So let's bring the bill to the House. Let's have a good look at it. In principle, we support what they're trying to do here, and we hope that at the end of the day, this can get passed and make it better for us all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My apologies to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I would never forget his riding.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'm pleased to be taking part in and speaking to the International Day of Pink initiative that is taking place today. This is a day on which we can all celebrate the great diversity of our multicultural province and a day on which we can all join together to stand against all forms of bullying and discrimination.

Every one of us here is well aware of the irreversible damage that bullying can do to young people's lives. It can impact students on both a mental and a physical level, which consequently also leads to a resulting decrease in academic performance by students.

Ultimately, it can lead to the needless loss of a life. On Sunday, a young woman named Rehtaeh Parsons, just a few weeks before her 16th birthday, tragically took her life after having faced relentless bullying. It is unacceptable that someone should have to endure the negativity and pain resulting from discrimination, regardless of the form it takes.

Increasingly, bullying takes place away from the classroom and the school playground. It now often takes place online, making it difficult for an adult to step in, leaving kids feeling alone. For this reason, it is important that we ensure that these children know they are not alone, and that they have somewhere they can reach out to for help.

1540

Wearing pink today, we are showing our solidarity and indicating that we do not tolerate any form of bullying. We are showing that we want to create a society in which all people can feel safe, respected and accepted.

Today, as we take part in this initiative, we are following the example of students from Nova Scotia who stood up to discrimination and started the day of pink. Their idea quickly became a great success and their initiatives swept across not only Canada, but the United States as well. This success story had just one simple but powerful message behind it: Anyone can bully, anyone can be victimized by bullying, but together we can stop it.

I would also like to congratulate our local students who are taking part in various anti-bullying events in their schools today. Through education, I am confident that we will one day get rid of the needless voices of discrimination, not only in our schools but everywhere across the province of Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm pleased to rise in support and celebration of the International Day of Pink. My thanks

to all of those activists who put heart and soul into combating bullying across this country; in particular, my congratulations to those who have organized these events all over Ontario.

As has been said by my colleagues, those who have spoken today and those who have spoken on other days, bullying damages people's psyche, leads to injury and, in extreme occasions, can lead to death.

Everyone in this House has been touched in one way or the other by bullying. Everyone in this province, either in their own personal lives or in the lives of those who are close to them, who matter to them, has had to encounter and deal with bullying.

Speaker, it's entirely right and proper that today we take a moment to think about those who have been bullied and to celebrate those who have the courage and strength to take on the issue.

Last year, this Legislature took a small step forward with the Accepting Schools Act. But I say to you, Speaker, I've been made aware that it's still the case in some Ontario schools that, even though there's interest in and demand for gay-straight alliances, they are not being formed, that students who are concerned to organize, to make their schools safer, are not getting the support that they need.

I'm concerned as well, because in the course of the debate on that bill, I had the occasion to do the research, to look at the background, and it was clear that having a good number of adults in a school helped make those schools safer. We've seen reductions in education budgets in the last budget and, with the recent announcement of grants for our school boards, further reductions. That means more young people at risk. That's the wrong direction. And my hope is that, collectively, we will move to correct that.

My thanks, again, to all the young people who have stood up, taken a position, spoken out against bullying, and to a recognition today, Speaker, that there is far, far more to be done in this province.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party to speak about the reintroduction of the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, which is a bill that is a direct result, as we've heard already, of the issues and concerns that have been raised around this government's extreme measure, extremely aggressive approach, towards those who gathered in peaceful protest around the G20 summit in 2010.

Mr. Speaker, the act repeals the Public Works Protection Act, which was a measure brought in in the 1930s, in an era where our national sovereignty was certainly thought to have been at risk, an era where war was imminent, an era where the enemy was a foreign enemy and we were fearful that our borders could have been breached.

The government decided in 2010 to take the full scope of that act and to implement it on its own citizens here in

downtown Toronto. It only became apparent that they trampled civil liberties in the use of this act after the damage was done. We heard stories of those who gathered in peaceful protest. One gentleman was a 57-year-old from Thorold, Ontario, who was also an amputee and was kettled. His prosthetic was taken away from him and he was dragged into a police cruiser. This is how far this government was willing to go to fight peaceful protest and a democratic process that should be fundamental in this province.

We certainly agree that this Public Works Protection Act should be dismantled and never see the light of day again. We do agree with the reduced scope of what the new bill does, and we look forward to debating again to ensure that no government in the future can ever enact those types of really strong-handed measures on its people ever again.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. John O'Toole: It's always good to be first.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I say that with the greatest degree of modesty.

A petition from my riding of Durham reads as follows—and I support this one, really, without any excuse:

“Whereas the United Senior Citizens of Ontario has expressed its concerns over the high costs of parking at hospitals in Ontario on behalf of its more than 300,000 members; and

“Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income and cannot afford these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association Journal has said in an editorial that parking fees are a barrier to health care and add additional stress to patients who have enough to deal with;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Ontario's members of provincial Parliament, and the” Kathleen Wynne “government take action to abolish parking fees for all seniors when visiting hospitals.”

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for

several years ... faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

“Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

“Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

“Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

“Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a ‘custodial’ care arrangement; and

“Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

“Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

“(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

“(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

“(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services.”

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to give it to Theodore to be delivered to the table.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from the York–South Weston community and residents, who petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Whereas there have been several incidents of violence and crime related to the illegal sale and service of alcohol in our community; and

“Whereas we, as a community, want safety and peace of mind and know that giving law enforcement better tools to combat criminal actions will help meet this goal;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 8, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act (Serving Liquor in Certain Places), 2013, into law."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and hand it over to page Louis.

1550

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the" unacceptable and "unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the ... government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I totally agree with this petition, and I affix my name. I'll send it with Amina to the desk.

GREENWATER PARK

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the present government of Ontario should reverse the closure of Greenwater provincial park in Cochrane, Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reverse the closure of Greenwater provincial park, to allow the park to remain fully operational and open to enable people from all over to enjoy camping and visiting on its" beautiful "grounds."

I fully agree, attach my signature and send it down with Annie.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Stop the trades tax petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I wholeheartedly support this petition, and I sign it and give it to page Jack.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If I had known it was going to be this loud, I might not have gone to you.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses, and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition and will present it to page Gory.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the" McGuinty-Wynne "government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

Mr. Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with this petition, and I'll affix my name to it.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll take this moment to remind our guests in the galleries that you're not to clap or make noise. Thank you very much.

Further petitions?

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that says: "Whereas Avastin is approved for use in the treatment of glioblastoma by Health Canada; and

"Whereas Avastin is currently covered for this treatment by the provincial governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia; and

"Whereas in a clinical study Mr. Kevin Graham had a positive response to this medication and his tumour stopped growing; and

"Whereas Mr. Graham and other glioblastoma patients have not had positive responses to other chemotherapy drugs currently covered by the government of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We respectfully request that Cancer Care Ontario be directed to reassess the importance of funding Avastin for brain cancer patients in Ontario to ensure equal access for Ontarians to the benefits of this treatment."

I fully agree with this petition. I will sign it—I wish Mr. Graham all the best in his treatment—and I will present it to the Clerk through Nicholas.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Todd Smith: I also have a petition here, a "stop the trades tax" petition that was collected during a very successful Quinte Home and Renovation Show over the weekend in Belleville. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I agree with this 100% and send it to the table with Jason.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Robert Bailey: I appreciate the opportunity.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I agree with this, and affix my name to it.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I couldn't agree more. A thousand dogs have already died this year. I'm going to sign this and give it to Callum to be delivered to the desk.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: This is Hospital Day in Ajax-Pickering.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Rouge Valley, Ajax and Pickering hospital campus was expanded and opened one and a half years ago, with the largest expansion in our community's history; and

"Whereas the new growth in this area creates added pressures to the system; and

"Whereas the rapid changes in modern technology create the need for infrastructure upgrades;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, sign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario continue to invest in our Ajax-Pickering community hospital by adding additional services on an ongoing basis so our residents can continue to receive the best care in this province."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encour-

aging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the" McGuinty-Wynne "government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I support this and will be signing it. Thank you.

1600

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough-Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough-Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough-Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

"Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough-Agincourt riding; and

"Whereas the commission's report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough-Agincourt community; and

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough-Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough-Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough-Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401."

I fully support the petition, and I give it to Jarrod.

VISITORS

Mrs. Julia Munro: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this moment to take the opportunity to introduce three constituents, Sherry Eglas, Brenda Clair and Kathy Simpson, who are here to join us for this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll let that go but, of course, that's not a point of order.

OPPOSITION DAY

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I move that, in the opinion of this House, whereas the McGuinty-Wynne government's decision to create the Ontario College of Trades will impose yet another job-killing tax on hard-working tradespeople by levying millions upon millions of dollars of new fees that have no clear benefit and that will go to a new government bureaucracy that is not accountable, resulting in increased costs of trades services upon everyday Ontarians; and,

Whereas Ontario's tradespeople already pay fees for licences and other government fees, the new Ontario College of Trades will merely become yet another government bureaucracy that no one wants or needs and will make life more expensive for all Ontarians and make everything from getting a haircut, to hiring a plumber, to buying a new home, to getting your lights or heating fixed or to having your car repaired more expensive; and

Whereas Ontario has struggled enough under 10 years of deliberate decisions that have increased taxes and overspending in Ontario and a failure to attract more people, especially young people to skilled trades, the imposition of the Ontario College of Trades is nothing more than a jobs tax that will make job creation more expensive and it will drive even more Ontarians out of the trades or out of Ontario;

Therefore, the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals should abandon their misguided job-killing trades tax and abolish the College of Trades.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Dunlop has moved opposition day 3. Mr. Dunlop.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to bring this opposition day motion before the House today.

I want to first of all thank all of my colleagues that are here. I want to welcome everyone here that has come out in support to abolish this. You might have heard that little baby crying in the background there earlier today. That's Amanda Walker.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Samantha.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: What is it? I'm sorry. I've got her name: Samantha Walker. She'll be a fifth-generation electrician in a company up in Midland, Ontario, and she's already mad about this College of Trades and this tax hit. That's why she was crying up there.

My comments today—I'll limit them to a few minutes—are based on a consultation I did over the last 15 months. I do appreciate the fact that our leader, Tim Hudak, gave me the job as critic for skilled trades and apprenticeship reform. When I really got looking at this College of Trades, the reason I decided to get out and

talk to people in the communities was because no one else was doing it. I didn't hear MTCU doing it. I didn't hear anything coming out of the House here. I certainly see nothing from the Ontario College of Trades. So I decided to hit the road. I'm quite proud of this, Mr. Speaker: I've been in over 120 communities in the province. That's not saying I spent all my time in one riding or something like that. I've been to Fort Frances and Cornwall. I've been to Ottawa, Windsor—

Interjection: Manotick.

Interjection: Sarnia.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You guys don't need to tell me where I've been. The reality is, we have covered the province.

Mr. Speaker, what I've learned in that time is that people do not want the Ontario College of Trades. Although the previous two ministers, along with the current minister, all talk about the College of Trades and how wonderful it is, I don't know who likes it, other than a few—there are a few people who are in favour of it. Certainly, there's no question that the Working Families Coalition group likes it. The business managers of the major construction unions like it, the Ontario Construction Secretariat likes it, and a few people in COCA like it.

Who's opposed? Well, the Ontario Construction Employers Coalition, representing over 200,000 people; the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; community colleges—last night I talked to a number of people from community colleges and they're shaking their heads on this thing; they just can't believe it—and the Ontario career colleges. One of the new partners in this whole program has been the Trillium Automobile Dealers Association, representing over 47,000 employees in Ontario working in automotive. They're opposed to it as well.

Why are they against it? The messaging that has come from the Ontario College of Trades—they keep changing their minds about what they really represent. First of all, they were all about helping young people get into the trades. That didn't really work out too good because everybody is helping the young people getting into trades—and we're actually finding, between ratios and the actual College of Trades, it's a barrier. So they've changed their messaging on that.

Then they moved into the safety feature factor. "You know what? It's all about safety. These people who are out there today are mean, and they're not treating our young people right. It's a safety feature." Well, that doesn't fly at all. We know all the data on that; it's complete hogwash.

So, what are they doing now? Consumer protection—about all these mean guys. They must be talking to Mike Holmes every day. It's all about consumer protection.

The reality, Mr. Speaker—and I've seen this right across Ontario—I don't think we've ever seen a time in the province when our roads, our bridges, our high-rises, our subdivisions, all the developments we do were built

better than they are today by these people right here. So we have—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A second reminder to the gallery: No clapping, no making noises. Unfortunately, if you do, I'll have to have you removed. They get to make the noise, unfortunately. That's the way it is.

Continue.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, they really like me, Mr. Speaker.

Why are they against this thing? Well, first of all, the governance fees. When you increase fees by 676%, there's something wrong with the picture. They're thinking that everybody is making hundreds of thousands of dollars. Do they understand that there are a lot of people out there scraping by, whether they're apprentices or journeypeople or businesses? Ontario is suffering, and hitting people with those kinds of rates is absolutely incredible and is the wrong thing to do. The reality is, we don't hear enough about it.

This is my next thing: governance. We've got Mr. Johnson, the chairman of the board of directors and the board of governors, in place right now. The tradespeople are asking me, "If we're paying \$120 of our membership for this, when are we going to be able to vote for our own chairman and our own board of governors?" They want to know that. I asked the minister that this week. He had absolutely no answer at all. We want to know that, and I'm going to tell you, we're going to keep hounding you until we get that date. It's completely ridiculous to think that these people would pay for a board of governors and not in fact have a chance to vote on who they're putting on there. That's what you call democracy.

Then, the trades cops: 150 trades cops. Apparently, they all want vehicles. The vehicles will probably be like an OPP cruiser, only there will be different colours or something, and they'll have different kinds of hats. The reality is, they're \$30,000 or \$40,000 a vehicle, and there are 150 of them. That's \$7 million right there.

1610

Ron Johnson, only a few weeks ago, was saying, "We can operate the whole thing on seven million bucks." That's hogwash. That's what they're going to pay for. For what? These guys are going to be paying for the trades cops to go in on their own places. That's shameful, and it's wrong. I can tell you right now that we're going to continue to fight this thing all the way, based on those two principles alone, Mr. Speaker.

The boondoggle continues. We've seen over and over again the comments coming from the public. I got a couple, Mr. Speaker. Here's one that was sent today. I'm not going to give the guy's name, in case, you know, they go after him or something:

"Good day. This college creation is preposterous in the way it has been brought forth. When I called to find out how the college will work, benefit and mainly how it is implemented, I was told that a contribution could have

been made at the public input stage. This is where it becomes ridiculous.

"I questioned the fact that I could be informed of the creation of the college but was not notified of the public input stage of its potential creation. To this I'm told, due to freedom of information they did not have access to the mailing lists of the trades in order to notify us of the potential change; it was only when the college was created that they could have access to the lists.

"This whole thing stinks of underhandedness, a manipulation to force through a program that would see much opposition had it been done in an open manner.

"What I would like to see is the financial accountability behind this. Why was the old system abolished, and what is the cost of this newly created bureaucracy?"

We know that right now, because we know that somewhere around \$80 million a year is what it's costing for this new bureaucracy. That's a fact. And then as we compulsory certify all the other trades—remember, guys, there's 157 trades altogether. Only 22 are compulsory certified right now and only the people with CFQs are actually getting their membership fees. I think all of you guys probably got some of these things. I got one as a plumber, and proud of the trade. And you know what? Some of the other folks I know haven't even got them yet.

But what I want to say is, this thing seems to have gone off the rails very, very early, and now the tradespeople in the province are going to be expected to pay for it. What I'm asking all the members of the House to do is think of these people. Think of the 200,000 people that the Ontario Construction Employers Coalition represents. Think of the 47,000 people that the Trillium Automotive Dealers Association represents. Think of the fact that they're taxpayers here and this is an abuse on them.

I'd ask everybody in the House to abolish this nonsense. It's got to go. And the bottom line is this: The sooner the election, the better. You know what? Tim Hudak and the PC caucus will abolish the College of Trades. It's a done deal. I'm proud of that, and I can tell you right now, as a tradesperson and as someone who has visited 120 communities this year and talked to thousands of people, that that's what they want to happen. They want this College of Trades abolished. It's a mistake.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to all the other comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to preface my speech with this: All of us in this House agree that our diverse talent pool of people is the foundation of our economy, and it's what gives Ontario a creative edge. But if innovation is the key to helping Ontario grow and prosper, then we on this side of the House suggest that government must do everything possible to ensure its policies support, not hinder, our greatest resource. To us, reaching that potential means breaking down silos of bureaucracy, not building more; modernizing, not antiquating, the appren-

ticeship system; and organizing our economy in a way that will remove, not add, barriers to job creation.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The opposition is very loud when their member is talking. I can't even hear him, and he's representing you. A little quiet, please.

Continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thanks, Speaker.

To us it is important, indeed crucial, that all reforms not inhibit, but support, job market flexibility and competition. Therefore, the College of Trades and the trades tax are the wrong choice of reform for Ontario and should be abolished. In fact, I suggest to you that the College of Trades is utterly pointless and the trades tax is just another Liberal tax-raising scheme, so much that it's difficult to think of a more effective method of destroying jobs than raising taxes on workers and skilled trades—electricians, plumbers, bricklayers, hairdressers and so on.

I urge my colleagues in the other two parties to step outside the Queen's Park bubble and take a look outside. These electricians, plumbers, bricklayers and so on are working in the midst of Toronto's great building boom. I recently read there are 190 high-rise buildings in the works right now, and that we have more towers under construction than both New York and Mexico City, cities that have three times Toronto's population. To that end, it's hard to imagine this government chooses not to work in parallel worlds with them.

As our member from Simcoe North and apprenticeship reform critic said—and Garfield Dunlop, a skilled trades plumber, knows—he has toured just about every corner of Ontario as part of the Stop the Trades Tax campaign. Tradespeople are rejecting the Liberals' tax grab and saying no to the College of Trades scheme. They don't want the Liberal-imposed astronomical membership fees: \$60 annually for apprentices, \$120 for journeypersons and employers and sponsors, resulting in a 600% tax increase.

If you, the Liberals, care to deliver meaningful reform and to work in parallel and as a true partner with our skilled tradespeople, then level their playing field with the rest of the country. Change the apprenticeship ratio from 1 to 1 to 3 to 1. The fact is, the government urges young people to enter the skilled trades at the same time it keeps them from working by sanctioning the highest apprenticeship ratios in Canada.

A constituent in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound recently explained her plight to find employment. All she wants is a job as an apprentice electrician but cannot find anyone to hire her, not because there is no demand—the demand is abundant—but because the Liberal government refuses to ease this ratio.

But there is some positive news for the members opposite. Easing the ratio involves a simple administrative step by your Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. So instead of doggedly rallying around this tax-raising scheme to fund a new silo of bureaucracy—

kind of like what the old Soviet commissars used to do before their economy went belly-up—own this mistake; fix it so that young people get a chance, a real shot at working and earning a wage as an apprentice in Ontario. To go with the status quo would be simple ineptitude, the equivalent of Premier Wynne and her Liberal government shrugging and saying oops to the 600,000 unemployed Ontarians, underemployed or those who have given up looking for work altogether. The question you have to ask yourselves is this: Is this how you want your legacy summed up?

Stop the trades tax today. I implore you. Stop the trades tax today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm eager to speak to this motion moved by the member from Simcoe North on the College of Trades. The College of Trades is not a unique concept by any stretch. Nurses, doctors, insurance brokers and lawyers all participate in regulatory bodies that set standards and regulate their professionals, yet we don't hear the opposition clamouring to abolish those bodies.

Here we have the College of Trades as a brand new organization that is strongly supported by both the construction trades and most large construction contractor-employers. It has the ability to be a very important vehicle for breaking the impasse on a number of decades of old apprenticeship policies and issues, and offers protections to the public as well as trade workers.

It seems to me that this particular motion is motivated not by the need to ensure that our trades have a voice that helps to regulate a largely unregulated industry but is rooted in the opposition's need to tear at the seams of anything supported by a union. Quite honestly, I am disappointed in the same dance from this opposition over and over again, which is, if it's a union, bash it; if it's a service, privatize it—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I hate to say this, but the third party and the government were very quiet when you were speaking. It appears you're not giving them that courtesy. And I'll tell you one thing, first warning to the person, and next time they're gone.

Continue.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm not sure where you cut me off, Speaker, so I'm going to repeat the important part I want to make sure I get across.

Quite honestly, I am disappointed in the same dance from this opposition over and over again, which is, if it's a union, bash it—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark is named—first warning.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —if it's a service, privatize it. And if there's a pension, take it away. I think our tradespeople deserve more than the same old lines from this opposition—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark is named.

Mr. Hillier was escorted from the chamber.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, that's why we have freedom of speech and our own opinions, and I think we should respect those.

I think our tradespeople deserve more than the same old lines from the opposition that have been used over and over again. There are real issues at stake and reducing this discussion to simply “no” demeans our tradespeople and the people of Ontario, who are entitled to more diligence from us in this chamber.

1620

I disagree with the opposition's motion to abolish the College of Trades. I say this because I genuinely believe in the idea of what the College of Trades was meant to be. Back in 2009, when the government introduced the legislation on the college, my party supported the idea of creating an arm's-length body to streamline approvals of industry recommendations which included proposing new compulsory trades, reviewing journey-person ratios, updating curriculum and other important matters. Among the many duties of the college outlined in the original legislation was reviewing the compulsory trades application, review of apprenticeship ratios, enforcement of apprenticeship standards and discipline.

Back in 2009, we also expressed our concerns over the creation of the college because it wasn't clear if the new structure would truly be industry-driven or whether the new college's cumbersome structure would be merely a substitution of one bureaucratic barrier for another. At the time, the government did only a meagre job of communicating what the province's apprentices and journey-persons would get from their membership fees; today, that remains fundamentally a challenge that the college has yet to address. The college needs to remember that the long-term benefits flowing from their work are not even close to obvious to its members or the general public. It is essential for the college to improve its communications with the membership to demonstrate the benefits that will emerge from the college's work.

Personally, I am concerned with the broad approach the college has taken by mandating both compulsory and voluntary trades into their membership. By claiming both types of trade groups as members before structures and services to both categories of members are ready to be rolled out seems like another McGuinty-era “If we build it, they will pay” initiative.

Much like the gas plants, eHealth and Ornge, this government can't seem to stop off-loading their mistakes in governance to the people of Ontario. Since 2009, the provincial government has shelled out as much as \$22 million per year for the college, and now they are looking to off-load those costs to any and every tradesperson they can find. In fact, according to a report in the Windsor Star today, the cost of the college now sits at approximately \$30 million per year. While fees are an important part of membership to any organization, most important is the part to ensure that the membership

understands what they are paying for. Membership implies benefits, and these have yet to be communicated in an effective way to the membership. Quite frankly, enough public money has been spent while this government farmed out oversight and responsibility to outside agencies and then claimed ignorance. Tradespeople deserve to know what the college is and the benefits of their membership. It should be a professional association they understand and are proud of.

In fact, the college has done much work since its creation. Their efforts toward apprenticeships are very important work that should not be taken lightly. Under the Mike Harris government, the apprenticeship system in Ontario was split in two by placing industrial trades in a new act and leaving construction trades under the old Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. These actions deregulated the system and shifted the focus from apprenticeship as an employment relationship to apprenticeship as an education and training relationship. It removed the enforcement of the regulatory provisions that regulated wage ratios and wage rates, and it removed entry levels and duration from the legislation.

The NDP believes that skill sets must not replace whole trades. While there must be flexibility to recognize genuine trades as technologies change, this must not be an excuse to fragment existing trades into partial components or skill sets which are then treated as new trades in themselves. The Harris changes redefined the work of the specific trades to that of simple skill sets, which resulted in an increase of multi-crafting and multi-skilling and further fragmented existing trades. The splintering of trades compromised the health and safety of workers, as well as consumer safety and environmental protection. It is leading to a generation of workers who lack an understanding of the complete trade and an overall deskilling of Ontario's workforce.

My party has a different idea about the role the college can play in protecting the public good that our colleagues in the opposition don't seem to share. The NDP believes that the college can also play an extremely important role in enforcing trade standards for consumers as well as act as a disciplinary body for tradespeople who have consistently violated industry standards. Any consumer will be able to lodge a complaint with the college if they feel that work done for them does not meet acceptable standards. And that's not an urban myth; it actually happens. It happened to me.

Ontario New Democrats continue to support the valuable work the college is doing in reviewing the compulsory trades and apprenticeship ratios and look forward to further reports from the college on these and other vital apprenticeship issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. They start before I even get a chance to begin.

This week, the Ontario College of Trades launched as a fully independent regulatory college and opened its

doors to its members. For the first time, people who work in the skilled trades will have the power to decide what matters most to them. These are the people who build our homes and our office buildings. They're the people who ensure that our cars and buses get us safely to where we need to go. They bake our bread and prepare our meals. They keep our homes heated and our water running properly, and they make sure that we have the electricity that we need in our homes and our businesses.

Our government believes that the people who work in our skilled trades deserve the same privileges and respect that we afford to teachers, to doctors, to nurses, to dentists, to accountants, to veterinarians, engineers, social workers, lawyers and architects, and the list goes on and on. All of those occupations have their own regulated colleges, so why should the skilled tradespeople across this province be treated with any less respect?

The PC Party disagrees with that; I get that. Through this motion today, what they're saying to skilled trade workers across Ontario is that they don't think they're important enough to have their own regulatory college. I respectfully disagree. The PC Party doesn't think that skilled tradespeople are smart enough to make decisions that impact their trades. Well, I'll take the views and experience and expertise of our skilled trade workers across this province ahead of the simplistic, negative, inaccurate and politically motivated views of the PC Party any time.

This College of Trades is a very important step forward. The college will allow those who know the industry best to effectively enforce their own standards and ensure that both Ontario's consumers and workers are protected. The College of Trades will move the skilled trades into a new era of credibility, accountability and prestige. As I said, it's a very important step. As my colleague opposite said, it's already up and running. To suggest today that we should kill it before it even has a chance is simply irresponsible and, frankly, an insult to every man and woman working in the skilled trades across Ontario today. This is not the time to retreat, as the official opposition would want us to do; it's the time to move the skilled trades forward, time to move the skilled trades ahead.

For generations, the skilled trades in Ontario have been one of the few major professions without their own regulatory body. Rather than make decisions for themselves, they've had to rely on the ebb and flow of politics—to put it more bluntly, the political priorities of politicians and bureaucrats, and that's of all political stripes. With the College of Trades, those days are now, thankfully, over.

The Ontario PCs believe that they know better than the skilled trades sector how to regulate their industry. That's what I call arrogance. We in this government respectfully again disagree with their approach. We believe that apprenticeship ratios and industry matters are best left to the industry to decide—not politicians, not bureaucrats and not special interest groups.

I'm sorry to tell my friends in the PC Party that their political agenda is now going to have to take a back seat

to the interests of the skilled trades. That may be bad news to the PC Party's political objectives, but it's good news for the skilled trades industry across Ontario.

The College of Trades will have value for consumers as well, and that's very, very important. The College of Trades will help ensure that when the people of Ontario need the services of a tradesperson, they get the skilled, well-trained and accountable workers they expect and the quality services that they deserve. This will help to protect the safety of not only the public but workers and apprentices as well. A public register will allow consumers as well as employers to check to see if the person that they're considering hiring is a member in good standing—

Interjections.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess you ignored my statement. The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke—last warning.

Continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The College of Trades will also serve to ensure that our skilled workers don't face unfair and unqualified competition. That's important as well.

There will also be a neutral, independent forum where consumers can go with complaints or concerns about services they've employed. I'm pleased today to introduce Peter Silverman, who happens to be here with us today watching the proceedings. Most of us, I think, in this chamber and outside of this chamber know Mr. Silverman as one of the great advocates for consumers across Ontario. We're pleased to have him here, and we're pleased that he's here in support of the College of Trades.

If you believe in consumer protection, then you should be supporters of this new College of Trades. Our government took the bold move to establish this new regulatory body, the first of its kind in North America, as a way of ensuring a strong future for the trades. The decision to establish the college was not taken lightly. It does represent a bold step forward, but the work is not yet done. It will take hard work and commitment by all parties in the trades for the college to realize its full potential.

My colleague from the NDP, I think, spoke of her aspirational views of where she wants this college to go, and I hope the college will be what it can be. It is going to take some time. It's new, it's the first of its kind, and it will no doubt have some growing pains. It will take some political will and understanding in order to see it through. So I want to thank the NDP for their support of the College of Trades. I think that's very important.

I say to the PC Party, it's time to put the interests of the skilled trades ahead of your own political interests. I call on all stakeholders and colleagues to be constructive and patient as the College of Trades emerges as a strong champion of this vital sector. Our skilled tradespeople deserve the respect this college will bring them, and they deserve the respect and support of all parties and all Ontarians.

Let me end by saying why all members of this Legislature ought to be supporting the College of Trades. If you believe in enhanced consumer protection, you ought to be supporting the College of Trades. If you believe in promoting the skilled trades as a career opportunity for our young people, you ought to be supporting the College of Trades. If you believe in providing protection to certified, skilled tradespeople from the underground economy, then you also ought to be supporting the College of Trades. If you believe that decisions impacting skilled trades should be made by skilled trades experts, based on building a strong skilled trades sector, as opposed to by politicians, based on political interests, then you ought to be supporting the College of Trades.

Let me close by saying this: I just want to say thank you to Tim Armstrong, Ron Johnson and their team and many of the people here today, for the great work that they've done in making the College of Trades a reality. Their leadership and vision will help build a stronger skilled trades sector that will contribute to building a strong economy and a stronger province for each and every one of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Huron—Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I proudly stand here today as a member of the only party in this House that is indeed standing up for the interests of our skilled trades behind us.

This is hogwash. I am disgusted and I'm disheartened by the ill-advised coalition that we've seen form in front of our eyes this afternoon. It's absolutely disgusting. How much consultation has happened here?

I have to thank Garfield Dunlop, who has spent 15 months travelling this province. He has listened to so many people. We know what's going on; we know what matters most. Garfield came into my riding of Huron—Bruce last July. He visited with H. Kerr Construction in Wingham and JMR Electric in Exeter. Most recently, last week, in a snowstorm, he travelled to Walkerton, to Huron Tractor.

Time and time again, Garfield gets it because he relates to the people and he understands what the issues are. This coalition is absolutely off base, and we need to start listening to the people, because guess what? This College of Trades is not necessary, nor is it wanted.

When I speak to Glenn Hays, an electrician from Teeswater—Hays Electric. He is an employer of upwards of 20 people in a small village in my riding. Time and time again he says that this government—and now, sadly enough, the third party is falling right in line with them—is doing nothing but setting up hurdle after hurdle for small business. They're doing nothing but driving our most valuable resources out of this province. In that regard, he was citing the number of young people who are leaving our communities and heading west. This is absolutely not acceptable.

I also think about the Reinhardt family that Garfield and I met at Huron Tractor in Walkerton. Mr. Reinhardt is a mechanic at Huron Tractor. He's very proud of his

wife, who is an electrician. And guess what? They're going to get the Wynne double whammy. Because of the number of licences the two of them hold, they're going to be taxed over and over again on their skills. This is unacceptable.

I also can't help but reference the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. I went on their website at lunchtime today. I took a look at their Q and As, specifically to memberships. I find it interesting, because sadly enough there are a lot of people playing word games in this particular House. You know, it was referenced that as membership in the college is not required for employers, each employer can determine whether or not they wish to join the college at this time. Conspicuous by its absence is the fact that as of January 1, there's going to be a mandatory tax per employee. I can tell you that employers like JMR Electric out of Exeter, who employs 225 people in that town, he is going to short-circuit. He is going to snap.

I have to ask again, how much consultation has really happened here? Do you really understand the negative impact this is going to have on our small business across this province? You know what? It's totally unacceptable. In my riding of Huron—Bruce, which I'm so proud to represent, more and more people get nervous and get their guard up when they hear that the Premier wants to continue to reach out, because sadly enough, they've concluded that the only reaching the Premier wants to do is into their pockets to take the scarce dollars they have left. It's totally unacceptable. Once again, this College of Trades is not wanted nor needed. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased to join the debate today. From the outset, I want to thank the initiator of the motion, the member from Simcoe—North, for the work he has done. As, I hate to say, a former tradesperson, because as a tradesperson, you always carry your working roots with you. You carry that knowledge with you in each and every career you go along, whether you leave it or not. The things you learn add to your knowledge base and hopefully make you a better worker and a more productive worker. I want to thank him sincerely for, I think, touching on some of the real, concerning issues that have come out of the College of Trades.

Number one, the consultation process—

Interjection: A mess.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It has been a mess. It was our hope from the outset—I heard one of the members of the opposition talk about various trades or various unions that have come to a new realization. That is true. We all had hopes from the outset that the communication strategy would be clear, direct and would show the mandate quite clearly under the college: what you're going to get for sometimes the money you're paying and what you were going to get for that type of representation. That has clearly not been done. As we today, those who were

affected by, or involved and encompassed under the umbrella of the college now, still have no idea about what it will do for them and what it can do, that's a complete failure in the communication strategy, not unlike what we've seen through other entities that have been governed by this Liberal government.

I would like to touch on other things. I want to tell those who are here today that I am a member of the Labourers Union Local 65 in LIUNA in Windsor, and proud to be a construction worker. I spent nearly 10 years in the field in the heavy sector, building bridges and sewers and overpasses and culverts, and trudging through the mud on different job sites that were always exciting provided me with a really great career—in a union environment—one that I made a great wage at, one that I had wonderful benefits working at, one that I knew that I was safe at because of the training that I got through my union, one I was able to raise a family on.

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My union dues were certainly a small percentage of what I got back in terms of representation. That connection between what I got for being a union member and what I had to pay was very clear. It afforded me my first house with my wife, my first car, the ability to have two kids, and to not worry about paying the bills.

I can easily make, and I will always make, that argument for anyone who's questioning whether they should be a unionized member or not. It's worth it. It certainly was for me. But is it worth it to be under the umbrella of the College of Trades? For some compulsory trades, I would say yes—the regulation side of it, the enforcement side of it, and specifically the fact—I have to touch on this—that your ratios under the apprenticeship are taken out of ministerial purview.

Here's why I support the concept of the College of Trades. In our sector, in the construction sector, those ratios are set through dialogue, through communication between union representatives and our contractor partners. They do it through local apprenticeship committees. They negotiate what the ratios are, dependent on labour market demand. So if there's a lot of work going on, then maybe they can take on some new apprentices. But I can tell you, by and large, the demand from our contractor partners was minimal in terms of wanting or needing to take apprentices on, because their jobs are time-sensitive. They need high productivity. They need to know they're going to get it right and get it done fast, right, on time, on budget and safely. That's what we were able to—not provide, not invoke, not direct—negotiate; that's what we did there. And it works. That model, under the College of Trades, is one that I believe in. Through consultation with those in the industry, whether they be executives or business folks or those on the union side, come to a dialogue in a dynamic way, a flexible way, and always make sure that that is a moving target for them.

Where I come into really direct conflict with the PC plan is that, of course, yes, they're pointing out some of the failures of the College of Trades, and I will agree with many of them, but there's no plan to replace it with anything else.

The other thing they're doing, and you hear it quite clearly, is that they want to go to a 1-to-1 ratio across the board; for all trades, all sectors, 1 to 1. I'll tell you, there are lots of people who are protesting the College of Trades. There will be triple, quadruple the amount of journeymen who are going to be in here protecting their careers, because they put—and you here, you who are journeypeople, have put years in the field, and you're not going to want to compete, you can't compete, nor should you deserve to compete, against apprentices. You're there to train them, you're there to get them into the job, but you shouldn't be competing with them, and that's what this motion is going to force you to do as journeypeople.

As a member of LIUNA, I brought in our training delivery model—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just to remind the member from Essex that he should be going through me and not talking directly to the crowd. Thank you.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I apologize, Speaker.

I brought in the training delivery model for LIUNA, where we initiated our construction craft worker apprenticeship program—level 1, level 2—as well as the pre-apprenticeship program, which is a gateway into the apprenticeship program. It has been incredibly successful. We have a 95% retention rate and success rate. It's a wonderful program that I'm incredibly proud of. Speaker, it's a model that actually works and one that I think the college should learn from and apply to.

My point, Speaker, with some time on the clock that I certainly need to share with my colleagues, is that this is a dynamic aspect. There is no rigid formula that will address our apprenticeship program. It has to be fluctuating, it has to be responsive and it has to be flexible.

I want to talk about the fees. We, on the NDP side, have a real problem with the fee structure and the communication of the fee structure. We don't understand how a hairdresser, who doesn't have the ability to make as much money as a journeyman electrician does, can afford that measure of membership fee. We think it's inadequate. We think it's actually a hindrance to their careers. We certainly need that to be addressed, and I think that's a practical, logical thing that anyone who's discussing the apprenticeship issue in the province should be talking about: How do we make it affordable and provide value?

What we see on that side is what we've seen on this side: a one-size-fits-all model, and I am not in favour of that. I'm not in favour of one size fits all. I'm in favour of a scaled model. If you're making \$30,000 a year in your career as an apprentice or as a journeyman, you shouldn't have to pay the same membership fee as someone who has the ability to make \$120,000 a year as a journeyman. That doesn't make sense to us at all. This is an issue that can be addressed through the ministry. It should be addressed through the college, but yet their communication strategy has been lacking—absolutely opaque in the process.

I think it was the member from Simcoe North who talked about voting for the boards of directors. I agree wholeheartedly that if you're a member, you should have the ability to vote. I think that structure works. I'll tell you why I think it works: because as a union member, I get to vote for my union leadership, the ones you want to dismantle, the process you want to dismantle. So, if you think you like membership fees, or you think you like voting—the democratic process—please understand that in labour unions, in trade unions, that is a democratic process. You call them “union bosses.” I call them duly democratically elected officials who represent us.

Obviously, there's a headline approach on both sides here. There has been a failure in the implementation of this college. We agree that this should have a whole lot more oversight on it and a whole lot more direct involvement on the government side, but it should happen through dialogue. It should happen through a clear process, not a top-down approach.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to get back to the ratios. The thing that the college does is take the decision to change ratios or to make ratios—Speaker, I'm talking right directly through you, not to these good people here. He can't even hear me. It takes that decision-making out of the ministerial purview, and I think that's a good decision. I think it's right. You know why? Because I don't trust them to make the right decision, and I certainly, certainly do not trust those guys to make good decisions as well, because we know it's 1 to 1; we know it's nothing over there. Let's put that decision-making into the industry's hands, into those contractors' hands who know the industry, who know the labour market demand and know what they require for their workplaces.

I want to talk about safety, because I'll hit on the 1 to 1. In my trade, we have a 3 to 1 ratio. That means that when I walk onto the job site as an apprentice, I know there's going to be at least three journeypeople around me to make sure the workplace is safe. When I'm walking onto an active construction site such as, let's say, a bridge, I'll walk on one day and we'll have inclement weather. The hazards are everywhere. I don't know what they are, but I have a journeyman here, a journeyman there and another one to point out those hazards to me and make sure I'm navigating them correctly, and also make sure that the process I'm working in is done appropriately. That's what the apprenticeship program is about. It's about learning from your peers. And the more peers you have on the job site, the safer you're going to be as an apprentice. But what is being proposed—the only proposal—is that a jobsite is going to be half rookies and half veterans. I'll tell you, that's going to just cause a calamity on important ICI and heavy construction sites. I can only speak for them.

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The best way to get apprentices out the door, trained and experienced, is to ensure that our economy is blossoming and employers are hiring. That's why the government should listen to the New Democrats when

we say, "Let's bring in an employer tax credit," where, if you're going to create a job, you can go to work. You'll get a tax credit.

I think I've been quite clear that both sides of the argument have some validity. There are some valid arguments here. It's not a cut-and-dried issue. Anybody who's looking at this seriously—and it is a serious issue—knows that it is not a cut-and-dried issue and it is not a one-size-fits-all model.

Our commitment, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Continue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Our commitment is to make the process better, to work with all parties involved—to work with the contractors, to work with the apprentices, to work with the journeypeople and to work with our safety experts and our industry experts—to make sure that this system works. We're committed to doing that. We will do that on an ongoing basis, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you very much for the time and attention today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to discuss this very important issue.

Our government is committed to protecting consumers and every Ontarian in this province, and to ensuring the integrity of Ontario tradespeople. I want to thank and recognize the current and former ministers for their leadership as we opened the Ontario College of Trades earlier this week.

I know this initiative will ensure that the decisions affecting tradespeople will be consultative, fair and transparent. I also want to say that tradespeople are now on the same, equal footing as other self-regulated bodies like doctors, teachers, nurses, accountants, architects and many others.

As a registered nurse, I know the importance of a professional college. The College of Nurses is an excellent example of how an industry has been able to succeed in our province when they are given the ability to make their own decisions. As a registered nurse for almost 30 years, I'm aware of the role and the responsibility of the College of Nurses. The only mission of the college, and any college in Ontario, is to protect the public. We have approximately 40 self-regulated colleges in Ontario, 26 of them in the health profession sectors. They are independent, and furthermore, they create their own standards of practice.

Let me remind the members of this House: We have members opposite who belong to the College of Pharmacists, members who belong to the College of Nurses; we have members who belong to the Law Society of Upper Canada. I don't believe that they see their membership fees as corporate taxes. I have never, as a regulatory member, ever seen my membership fee as a corporate tax, and I find that tone and the message offensive, okay? Let me be very clear.

The Ontario College of Trades is improving accountability. Whenever a resident of Ontario puts their trust in

a tradesperson, they need to know that the tradesperson is being held to a high standard and that the standard is being enforced. They also need to know that their interests and their wallets are being protected. That's the responsibility of the College of Trades. Furthermore, the establishment of the College of Trades ensures the process of dealing with complaints; the appropriate disciplinary body is there to ensure the protection of the consumers and Ontarians.

Every day in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt I hear about fraud stories. I hear about being taken to the cleaners by different tradespeople. For the first time, we now have a regulatory body that allows the consumers—Ontarians—to report.

Let us not forget, there was an article recently, on March 9, 2013, in the *Toronto Star* about this frail senior whose house has been wrecked by an unscrupulous contractor—her life savings gone, and she was nearly starved to death. So let's not forget those tragedies. My constituents tell me every day that when they hire a tradesperson, they want the tradesperson to be qualified and ethical. Under the protection of the College of Trades, they now have confidence that every tradesperson, whether it's a mechanic, electrician or contractor, is regulated and accountable.

Furthermore, we have statements from the industry. Jeff Koller, an industry compliance officer at the Ontario Construction Finishing Industries Alliance, recently wrote in the *Toronto Star*: "For the first time, homeowners who have been subjected to shoddy workmanship or defrauded out of money will have an avenue of restitution and compensation without having to resort to the costly and cumbersome court process."

By establishing a complaints, investigation and discipline body, like any other independent, self-regulated body, the Ontario College of Trades will be able to combat fraud and better protect Ontarians. The Ontario College of Trades will further strengthen their reputation and improve their ability to provide quality services for Ontarians.

The college will also give industry a greater role in recruitment, governance, certification and apprenticeship training. It gives tradespeople decision-making power for decisions that are important to them. We all heard today from the members for London—Fanshawe and Essex earlier about the fact that they will now have an ability to set the training standards, the ratios, the apprenticeships—this is what the college will be able to do, no different than my college, the College of Nurses. These are decisions best made by the people who know the industry and work with the industry, not by the government. We all said that, and I know that members opposite have said it in the past. The PC Party used to believe that a self-regulatory body is the best way to address this issue, and now they're changing their tune. I don't understand.

At the end of the day, the College of Trades is here to protect Ontarians. When I came to the Ontario Legislature, my job is to protect every Ontarian, and my role in

this House is to ensure that every Ontarian's work has been protected. More importantly, we are now recognizing the trades as not just building Ontario; we recognize the trades as a profession. They have a self-regulated professional body to regulate, to educate and provide the support that is necessary.

Let me conclude my remarks by quoting someone from the industry. Steve McClinchy, who is from Sault Ste. Marie, has been working in his industry for 30 years and says, "OCOT can instill the value of good-quality work and professionalism.... Tradespeople are pillars of a community, they provide a service just like a doctor in a community, but it isn't always seen that way."

I want to thank the members from the third party for your understanding and support of the Ontario College of Trades, because we in this House all believe that protecting Ontarians is the reason we're here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm so pleased to be able to stand here alongside my colleague Garfield Dunlop from Simcoe North, who has done an outstanding job, as he has referenced earlier, travelling the province. He has consulted with tradespeople across the province, and we can't say the same for the current minister, the previous minister or the current Liberal government. They haven't consulted with tradespeople, because if you did, you would hear that 88% of them don't want anything to do with the College of Trades. They don't want it.

I can tell you that I was at the Quinte sports show, the home and renovation show last week in Belleville, and I spoke with dozens of tradespeople in my region. They don't want the College of Trades. I can tell you I sent out a flyer; this is just a small portion of the flyer responses that I got two weeks ago: "We don't want the College of Trades, Mr. Smith. Get rid of the College of Trades." I'm so pleased to be able to stand here and support Mr. Dunlop, because we do need to stop this trades tax.

The members on the other side and even the members in the third party often talk about the fact that we need to create jobs in the province. Do they not understand that the College of Trades is a job-killing tax? It's not creating jobs; it's killing jobs in the province of Ontario.

Let's start with how insane it is to lump all these different tradespeople together into one regulatory body because they all went to a trade school somewhere. That's like dumping doctors and lawyers and engineers and lumping them all together because they went to a professional school. It's not the same thing. There are probably more lawyers who are trained as engineers than there are barbers who have been trained as electricians, but you're lumping them all into the same trades school. It doesn't make any sense to me.

1700

You know what? This is obviously you catering to your special-interest groups on the other side. We see through it. The tradespeople who are see through it. They know what this is: This is payback to Mr. Dillon and your Working Families Coalition. That's obviously what this is.

I can't believe that the members of the third party are actually supporting the College of Trades. I'm not sure if the member from Essex—I didn't quite know where he was coming from, but I can tell you that the Labourers union that he is a member of is against the College of Trades. They're against the College of Trades. Do you know what? The PC Party would give him an option to opt out of that union because he doesn't believe the same thing, apparently, as his union members do.

I can tell you that the member from Sarnia—Lambton is sitting here right next to me, and the member from Sarnia—Lambton has heard from hundreds of tradespeople, unionized tradespeople in the Sarnia—Lambton area: bricklayers, pipefitters—the labourers. They don't want the College of Trades. These organized labour unions don't want the College of Trades.

Let's move on to the myth that the college is, in any way, going to slow down the underground economy. They've made that claim over there. It won't. Uncertified people are still going to perform tax—tasks—that they're not qualified for. Sorry; I just keep saying "tax" because that's what this is. But they're going to still be performing tasks that they're not qualified for. Many local tradespeople have actually told me that they intend to protest the college by refusing to pay the tax. These tradespeople, who have been licensed for decades, know that the college isn't going to add any value to how they perform their jobs.

This is just a tax grab. The system has already been tried in Quebec. The results are obvious there for anybody who has been paying attention to the news headlines. Quebec is not the model that we want to bring to Ontario, and we're headed down that slippery slope there. It has caused projects in Quebec to increase 10.5%. It has cost the economy \$3.4 billion, and they say it has cost 50,000 jobs in Quebec. And we want to bring this to Ontario. These are not the models that we should be bringing in here—not to mention Bill 119, the WSIB increases; that's another matter altogether.

This is another bureaucracy that's being created by the Liberal government. They're famous for creating these useless bureaucracies. When these guys took power 10 years ago, there were 150 agencies, boards and commissions in the province of Ontario—150. Do you know how many ABCs there are in the province of Ontario right now? Six hundred and thirty of them. So let's create another one that's going to cost us jobs.

It's unbelievable what's happening over there. We already have enough useless government agencies at the provincial level. The last thing that we need to do now is create another one that's actually killing jobs; it's increasing the cost of haircuts; it's increasing the cost of oil changes; it's increasing the cost of renovations to our homes; it's increasing the cost of building a home.

Kill the College of Trades now. The labourers' unions are against it; associations across the province are against it. It appears that the only party in the Legislature that's against it is the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand in this House to debate this important motion. I too would like to thank the member from Simcoe North for the consultation process that he has exercised. Clearly this is an issue he cares passionately about, and I'm sure that whatever happens here today, the information that he has learned hopefully at one point would inform the college and make it stronger. I think that a fundamental difference that we have over on this side of the House is that this isn't a cut-and-dried issue. It's not a blue issue; it's not a red issue; it's not an orange issue.

We do have a real problem in this province around skilled trades and the training of those workers, and safety and consumer protection. This is, in our minds and our vision, a way to deal with those issues, although I think we can share some of the concerns. Certainly from a communication and an implementation strategy, it has not been carried out as well as it should be. There's definitely room for improvement.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think also we have to remember that a college is not a unique concept. When I first started working at the University of Waterloo, we were investigating the new college for social workers in the province of Ontario, and throughout that process we learned what was good about the college and what was not. Quite honestly, there was a proven need that we didn't know about around ethical investigations and around training and around safety and around standards. When you're dealing with people in the public, you need some standards. Some people don't agree, but certainly we do.

We also have to look at the resistance. What is the resistance to the college? It seems that there's a lot of fearmongering out there from the community at large and certainly from the party. They want to kill it. Even the language, "kill it"—I mean, we are here to serve the public. We have the privilege to sit here in this House and try to make life better for Ontarians. But this talk of "kill it" and also the entire approach, even the throne speech and the budget that they haven't even seen yet, there's a real issue here. It's a credibility issue. You haven't seen the budget, and yet you're not voting for it. You didn't vote for the throne speech, and you didn't try to make it better. We are committed to getting real results for Ontarians, and that includes tradespeople in the province of Ontario.

I think, actually, we just need to take a step back and look at the potential of the college. Certainly, when you look at the people who support it, the construction trades have come out and supported it. Most large construction contractors have supported it. You need to listen to those voices as well. They're important voices. They have the experience of being on the front line.

We believe also that the potential of the college is to break the impasse on the number of decades-old appren-

ticeship policy issues. There are long-standing issues in the apprenticeship field. Also, it's a way to offer protection to the public, as well as trades workers. There's proof that there's a need for the college; it's well documented. Just a quick search—CBC from March 23, "Contractor Facing Fraud Charges Still Working." Who's looking at that? Nobody. "Under-the-table Contractor Jailed, Fined for Tax Evasion." This is in the Kitchener Waterloo Record from Friday, September 30.

When you look at the Ontario Construction Secretariat, they've raised a number of concerns around the underground economy, which the minister has also raised. Everything from revenue losses to the income tax system to GST revenue loss to CPP and EI contributions lost: Those are revenue streams that are pushed underground, because we don't have a clear idea of where the tradespeople are, who's working, who's subcontracted out. I think there's a need for clarity on this; I really do.

In some respects, this also comes down to, in a very, very real way, consumer protection as a concern. You can't look the other way on this issue; you just can't. You shouldn't ignore it, just like you shouldn't ignore the throne speech, just like you shouldn't ignore the budget.

We believe in the College of Trades for these reasons. We believe in a review in compulsory trade applications. We believe in the review of apprenticeship ratios. We believe in the enforcement of apprenticeship standards. We believe that, when necessary, discipline is needed, especially when the rights of consumers have been compromised and standards are not upheld.

In many respects, we're here today because this is a little bit of a Mike Harris hangover. When Mr. Harris sat here under the so-called Common Sense Revolution, the Harris changes redefined the work of specific trades to that of simple skill sets, which resulted in an increase in multi-crafting and multi-skilling and a further fragmentation of existing trades. This splintering of the trades compromised the health and safety of workers, as well as consumer safety and environmental protection, and it is leading to a generation of workers who lack not only the education but an understanding of their complete trade, and to an overall deskilling of Ontario's workforce, consumer protection and worker safety included.

We have a different approach—very different, actually—from the party to the right of us in how to get results. We don't want to throw it out. We don't want to stamp it out. We don't want to kill it. We want to make it better. I think the people of this province actually expect us to make it better.

Interjection: Get results for Ontarians.

1710

Ms. Catherine Fife: To get results, yes.

But moving forward—it's not a complete carte blanche here—it was our hope that the college would implement an aggressive communications plan to ensure that the province's tradespeople understood the value and the role that the college could play in their lives and to the economy at large. Unfortunately, it is still not clear to us that the college has effectively communicated the

important role it can and should play in promoting and regulating the skilled trades in Ontario. We strongly urge the college to implement an aggressive campaign to explain the benefits of membership to Ontario's tradespeople.

You know, really, at the end of the day, we want the lived experience of tradespeople to be part of the conversation. I know the "conversation" word is a little over-used, but they have the expertise. Why not reach out to tradespeople in the province of Ontario? Why not include them and their work experience in the life that they have in this province?

Ultimately, we want to recognize that trades require the same level of governance as some of the other colleges in the province, the professional colleges. We regard them as professionals, we respect them as professionals and we want their input through the College of Trades.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. John Milloy: I think it's appropriate that I stand and just add to the debate for a few minutes because it was a number of years ago that, as Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I had the pleasure of bringing forward the legislation which in fact established the College of Trades.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much for that vote of thanks from the opposition.

I thought it was worthwhile putting this in a little bit of historical context. When I became Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, there were a number of outstanding issues when it came to the trades in the province of Ontario. One of them had to deal with the issue of compulsory certification. I think members are aware, and I know there's been a lot of back and forth today about the trades, that there are a number of trades in the province of Ontario—one could think of electrician as one that's often brought forward—where someone needs to be certified in order to practise that trade. In other words, it's compulsory that they have the proper certification.

The question was raised with me as minister, how does a trade in the province of Ontario become compulsory? Mr. Speaker, you may be surprised, and in fact members of the Legislature may be surprised, that up until the establishment of the College of Trades there was absolutely no process in place to make a trade compulsory or, if one even wanted to go to the hypothetical, to take a compulsory trade and make it that it was voluntary, as they call it, a voluntary trade. We had absolutely no system in place for that. The last time it had been done, if memory serves me correctly, was when Bette Stephenson was Minister of Education, I believe, in the late 1970s or early 1980s. It was basically done on the basis of lobbying of a minister.

I think we would all agree that we needed a system in place to make that very important decision. So we asked the leading expert in the field, a gentleman by the name

of Tim Armstrong, a former Deputy Minister of Labour, to look at the entire issue of compulsory certification.

At the same time, there was a lot of debate going on, particularly here in the Legislature, over the issue of apprenticeship ratios: What should be the proper number of journeypersons who can instruct an apprentice? What should that ratio be? As you're aware, Mr. Speaker, this is about making sure we have proper standards, to make sure that apprentices are given the right education, the right training, and are not, quite frankly, exploited.

There was a lot of back and forth at the time, and in his report Tim Armstrong spoke about the issue of ratios, the number of things that needed to be looked at across the board in terms of making that determination. He looked at the issue of compulsory certification and he came to a conclusion, and the conclusion was this: that we have in the province of Ontario a series of skilled trades, and if memory serve me correctly, there are about 150 different ones in this province which have reached a level of maturity where we needed to give them the responsibility and the power to start to make decisions about their own trades, around issues such as compulsory certification, such as ratios.

We also had and continue to have a challenge in this province of not enough young people wanting to go into the skilled trades, not enough young women wanting to go into the skilled trades, not enough aboriginal young people wanting to go into the skilled trades. When you started to add some of these challenges up, around ratios, around compulsory certification, around bringing young people into the trades, reaching out to groups that weren't overly represented; when you start to look at some of the issues around making sure that the apprenticeship program reflects the needs of the workforce, that we have a proper system in place where apprentices are being respected and moving forward, where we have young people, particularly in the voluntary trades, who are finishing their training in order to get that qualification and can move on with it, what Tim Armstrong said is that the system is mature enough right now. They should have ownership and responsibility of this, just as the lawyers, through the Law Society of Upper Canada, have ownership and responsibility of their profession; just as the nurses do, as the teachers do. What he proposed was the formation of a College of Trades which would recognize the importance of trades to this province, which would raise the profile of trades by making it a respected profession, on par with all the other professions that have self-governance and self-regulation. By giving them that responsibility, they could begin to deal with some of these issues around compulsory certification, ratios, making sure that the training is done properly across the board; making sure that particularly in the voluntary trades, people complete their training; making sure that consumers are protected so they know that if they're hiring a journeyperson, if they're a member of the College of Trades, they have that stamp of approval, and they would have a way to go forward if there were complaints.

We worked with Mr. Armstrong. Subsequently, right after that, we worked with Kevin Whitaker, now a respected judge of the federal court, who put forward a report which became the basis for the legislation which we brought forward in this House and which is the basis of what we're talking about today.

A lot of work has gone into establishing the College of Trades, making sure that it's responsive to the many challenges that are being faced by the skilled trades here in the province of Ontario.

As the minister has spoken about, both in question period and in his speech today, the college has been officially open for, I believe, two days, or three days, depending on how you want to count it.

I'm very proud of what we've accomplished. I think members of this Legislature should be supportive of the College of Trades. It has a great deal of work to do. It will, over the coming months and years, find its feet and become a very, very important part of a very important sector of the economy, the skilled trades.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, being fully in support of the College of Trades, I plan, as do all my colleagues on this side of the House, to vote against this motion that's being put forward today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I want to bring it back to what we're actually talking about here. We have skilled trades workers in the province of Ontario who are already regulated and are already licensed. All you're doing with this overlay—a College of Trades—is an additional expense and an additional cost to their ability to earn a living.

This College of Trades tax could actually make a difference between whether a skilled tradesperson stays in Ontario or moves to another province—shameful. What we should be talking about in this chamber is how to grow jobs, how to make jobs. All you're doing is putting up additional barriers to ensure that people are frustrated and want to move elsewhere.

Does this fee encourage people to hire apprentices? Of course not. Does it create jobs? Absolutely not. Why are we doing it? I have no idea, and I wish you would start to see the light.

Garfield Dunlop, when he talks about how he has travelled across the province—he's been doing your consultation for you. You should actually listen to what he's been doing. He's the one who's had respectful conversations with the skilled trades across Ontario, and in less than two months, he has collected 7,000 signatures that say "stop the trades tax." If that is not an indication that people are concerned, that people want you to take a left turn, a U-turn and actually stop this, then I don't know where that respectful conversation is coming.

I would like to share with you a few comments that I received from my community, from the people who are going to be impacted by these changes. Here's one that says, "I feel that there are more questions than answers and if you talk to anyone, whether they're a tradesperson

or a customer, no one knows about this tax. I want to know where the cost of this tax to us tradespeople comes from. Who came up with the cost? Is there a guide? And who is to say that it doesn't go up every year?!" Excellent question. "If it was incorporated with the licence every three years for us hairdressers—\$60 every three years and divide 120 a year to \$40, that you might think it's too much. I have been in this business for 35 years and my customers have always been my regulator. If I do bad work, they either tell me or they stop coming to me and tell their friends. This keeps me humble and my training up to par." Excellent explanation.

1720

Here's another one: "As tradespeople, we already pay an annual fee for our licence(s). Now the government wants us to pay an additional fee ... in order to keep our licence(s) in good standing. This additional" fee "will not provide us with any service or training that we don't already have. It is unnecessary. It is a blatant tax on the tradesperson! This is ... more about the government ... interfering and wasting time and money. We already have a self-governing body ... they are called customers."

If we don't start to understand that there is a public sector free trade enterprise operating in Ontario that allows us to regulate who we choose to do business with and who ultimately is going to succeed, then you're missing the point. You really have to start to understand that when this many people are concerned—7,000 people within two months—you know you're doing something wrong.

I would urge you, Minister, to pause, reflect and stop the trades tax.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I also want to extend my compliments to the member from Simcoe North. When I come to this House, I like to relate the issues back to how they affect people in Algoma-Manitoulin. I'm going to do that, but it's obvious that he's done that himself. He's done his homework, he's done his research, and it's important to use that information and improve what the Ontario College of Trades has actually implemented here.

The one thing I don't believe in is a reference that I use back home that people can relate to: the white paintbrush syndrome, where you're just going to paint everything and it's going to disappear, and not actually work at it and get the benefits that are potentially there for the individuals.

I'm going to talk about two particular individuals back home which really relate and bring a name to this place. I'm going to talk about a hairdresser. Let's say her name is Cindy. Cindy contacted me, and she was frustrated that she has to pay an exorbitant amount of fees in order to continue cutting hair, just to maintain her licence. She is frustrated with that process, and why the heck would she do it? She enjoys going to cut the hair of the elderly who are over at the hospital. She enjoys the fact that she can

continue to cut hair for individuals that are around her area. She's not doing this for a profit, but in order for her to maintain this, she'll have to pay this fee. There is a problem with the fee. There absolutely is a problem with this fee.

The other issue that I want to slightly touch on is a particular individual—she's a wonderful, strong woman. I actually worked on her file prior to being an MPP. I was a caseworker. I worked in the office, and I dealt with her case and the frustration that she had, because she was working, trying to cut corners, to bring a nice, comfortable home for her child who was in a disabled position, and the fact that the work was so—sorry, I've got to watch my words here—terrible that she is now fighting in order to recoup some of her monies, not only from that individual who came in, but because she went underground and got it done without the proper investigations or the proper reports. She now has to fight the government in order to get the monies that she's rightfully entitled to to getting this project done. So there are problems.

I love the fact that this House today is filled with tradespersons who are here. You're an actual benefit to our community. But the problem that we have is there are individuals out there that put a black mark on your industry. You hold a lot of pride with the work that you do. A lot of you have done it where you had to go back on a job site and fix somebody else's job which was improperly done in the first place. That's what we can get out of the Ontario trade college. That's some of the processes that are there in place. It's a black eye on you as the industry who is out there working on this. That's why we need some of these regulations that are in place: in order that there's accountability that is done, so that there is not a black eye and so that everybody can be proud of the work that is being done.

It's always easy for me to come in and relate this to back to home, because these are true things that have happened. I have no problem going back to my constituents and facing them and telling them that these are the reasons why I'm supporting this. I have no problem whatsoever.

There is a problem with this process; yes, there is. There was no consultation—limited consultation that was not relayed. There is a problem with the fees. We need to fix that. What I've heard from the government across the way is, you are thanking us for supporting this. But listen to us when we're saying that there are problems with it, and fix the damn problems.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a real pleasure for me to stand in the House today to speak against the motion that's being put forward by the member from Simcoe North and to speak in favour—strongly in favour—of the Ontario College of Trades.

Over the last number of minutes that I've been sitting here in the chamber today and even over the last number of weeks when I've heard members opposite, particularly

from the PC caucus, ask questions of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I've heard, definitely today, this theme over and over again about a lack of consultation with the industry and with people across the province of Ontario.

It really struck me as something that frankly doesn't ring true. I wanted to spend a little bit of my time this afternoon, because I can remember a time, before I came to this House and before I had the privilege of representing the good people of Vaughan in this chamber, in a previous aspect of my life, when I was working in an area that's somewhat related to this particular industry—to the community of skilled trades.

The former Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the member from Kitchener, our government House leader, talked a little bit about this a second ago when he was up speaking. I can remember a time when individuals such as Tim Armstrong, who was charged with the responsibility to do a review of compulsory certification by our government—when Mr. Armstrong, someone who's extremely well respected in the industry, travelled right across this province, conducted public hearings, frankly in every corner of this province. I think that I might have actually been in attendance for every single one of those consultations that Mr. Armstrong participated in and led. I will tell everyone who's here today that the conversations that took place in those consultations were fascinating. There were dozens and dozens, if not hundreds, of women and men from the community of skilled trades, representing various trades and various viewpoints, representing construction, industrial, motive, service and all of the different divisions that we have. People who came forward spoke honestly and spoke forcefully about why they are passionate to be working in the trades. It was through that process of extensive consultation that Mr. Armstrong was able to put together a proposal for the concept of creating something like a College of Trades to permit the community of skilled trades to belatedly, to ultimately, become self-governing.

Then, after Mr. Armstrong was done his consultation, this government appointed Kevin Whitaker to do an implementation report. Again, Mr. Whitaker engaged in extensive consultations in every part of this province. The funny thing for me, the curious thing for me, is that while I hear the members opposite talk about a lack of consultation, speaking as someone who actually attended many of those particular discussions and those meetings around the province, I can't recall seeing any one member of the Ontario PC caucus at any one of those consultations. I can distinctly recall that the member who has put forward the motion today—that I recall, anyway—was not in any one of those consultations. I find it very curious.

Here we are, a few years later, after so much work has gone into this and after there has been extensive consultation, and I see the members opposite standing up and frankly, from my perspective, acting like they are the great defenders of the community of skilled trades. To

me and the people that I represent, that claim, that ground that they're staking out, rings a little bit hollow because they weren't there through those consultations. The concerns that they claim to be expressing for the people who are in our galleries today and people who might be watching at home—they weren't there making those same claims three years ago, four years ago.

1730

I wanted to begin by saying that I think there has been a decent amount, an extensive amount of consultation done on this. I think the reports that came forward from Armstrong and from Whitaker were very strong reports. They laid the groundwork for our government to move forward with a fantastic concept, which is to finally demonstrate that we have an appropriate level of respect for those men and women who work in the skilled trades in our province; for the first time ever here in our province to say that we understand that you have the ability, that you are mature enough as a sector to govern yourselves. We want to put you on an equal footing with all of those other people in our province who practise their profession: doctors, teachers, nurses, as was mentioned; in fact, as was mentioned by my colleague from Scarborough—Agincourt, members opposite who are standing in their place today to oppose the College of Trades, to support this misguided notion—people who are actually members of their respective colleges, who think that it's okay for nurses to be self-governed but not for people who are working in the skilled trades.

On this side of the House, Speaker, we believe that the people who are working in skilled trades deserve that level of equality and that level of respect of this chamber and this Legislature and this government. That's why we've moved forward; that's why we've moved forward with this specific idea and concept.

The work is now beginning. The work has gone on for a number of months, and the folks at the College of Trades are working extremely hard to make sure that whether it's ratio reviews, whether it's the rest of the stuff that takes place within the mandate of the College of Trades, they are doing their very best to make sure that they're representing the views of the people who are going to be affected by this.

I did listen closely to some of the members from the third party and some of the concerns that they've been raising over the course of the debate today. And I'm going to say, the members from the third party have actually raised some very interesting comments. I don't think I would be the only one on this side of the House saying that no entity that any government creates on day one is necessarily 100% absolutely perfect; I think it's fair to say. There has been an extraordinary amount of work over a relatively short period of time that has been poured into creating this. But from my perspective, speaking as someone who, as I said earlier, was there towards the beginning of this process, I think this is evolutionary. This is about making sure that we get to where we need to be as it relates to the community of skilled trades.

But what's most important about this evolutionary process for me and for the people that I represent is that it's a process. It's an evolutionary process driven by those people that it will affect. It's not driven by politicians, and I have a great deal of respect for politicians. It's not driven by faceless, nameless bureaucrats, necessarily—and I have a lot of respect for those in our public service—but it's driven by the people who understand the industry, who understand the community of skilled trades because it affects them.

The last thing I'll say, Speaker: The one thing that I think is missing from this whole discussion that I've heard so far in the chamber today is that in many respects, the College of Trades was created and has been created to provide those individuals who have, frankly, yet to take on a career in the skilled trades. I have two young daughters, a five-year-old and a two-year-old. I don't know today what their future will hold for them, what profession they might take on, what occupation they might take on. But I want to make sure that while I have the privilege of serving in this House, I continue to support those undertakings that will provide them, should they choose to pursue a career in the skilled trades, any one of the more than 100 skilled trades that are regulated in the province of Ontario—should they choose to pursue a career in one of the skilled trades, I want them to have a direct say and a direct hand in shaping their future and in shaping the way their particular trade evolves over time.

With the College of Trades, we are empowering those currently in the industry and those, most importantly, who are yet to enter the industry, yet to enter the workforce as skilled tradespeople. We are providing them with the tools to be empowered and be enabled. That's why I strongly oppose this motion and I strongly support the College of Trades.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Nepean—Carlton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is a great pleasure to rise in debate today to support not only my colleague Garfield Dunlop, who I think has done a tremendous job, travelling our province, speaking to workers and defending the common person in this province who is trying to make ends meet. I owe you a debt of gratitude. We all do.

I'm also proud to be here today because there are people who have travelled that five-hour trip from the city of Ottawa to be here. That's not an easy feat for the constituents that I have. They have other things to do: you know, run a business, pay their bills, raise their families.

My friend John Herbert from the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association is here. We've been friends for a very long time. I'm so happy he made the trek. I know that up here we have some friends from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, including our candidate Roxane Villeneuve Robertson, who has been steadfast in her defiance with this piece of garbage legislation—

Interjection: Rubbish.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Rubbish.

My colleague from Leeds–Grenville has two sons who are in Fort McMurray, and he attributes the policies by this Liberal government, and the College of Trades being one of them, for having his sons leave this province. This used to be the province people from around the world came to; now we're exporting the next generation to Alberta, and we're doing it because of destructive policies like the College of Trades.

I think my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon said it most eloquently: For these people, their customers are their regulators. We have forgotten, at a basic level in this province, how to create jobs but, more importantly, how to maintain the ones we have. That is the fundamental flaw in what this government has done.

They talk about fees. Right now, I think we know that many of the people we represent are having a rough time paying their hydro bill, let alone figure out, if they're a small business or a small business owner like a hairdresser or a catering chef, how to find that extra fee to pay the government of Ontario and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and Pat Dillon and the Working Families coalition, and that front group of the College of Trades. They don't have that kind of money. They don't, and they shouldn't have to pay for it.

You want to talk about consultation. Why are 31 major organizations, major employers, in this province opposed to your bill? Mostly because of lack of consultation. They have not been part of the process, and they have been usurped. Why does my colleague have 7,000 names and signatures on petitions being opposed? Why did he have to go to 125 different communities across the province? Because you did not do your job.

This is going to be the official agency of the Working Families coalition, something I have personally fought against in this assembly and outside of this assembly for many years, something my colleagues have been impacted by, and a group that all they want to do, in terms of their existence, is one thing, one thing only, and that is to attack my leader, Tim Hudak. I think emboldening that union organization, that front group for the Liberal Party of Ontario, by giving them the College of Trades says so much to the people of this province that this is the wrong thing to do, it is the wrong time to do it, and that is why I encourage other members of this assembly to support us.

In closing, I say this, because I see my friend John Herbert who has come here from Ottawa, and I see Roxane Villeneuve and all my friends from Glengary–Prescott–Russell who will be watching Mr. Crack's vote at the end of this day. I say to them that we adhere to the great words of Ronald Reagan. The nine most terrifying words in the English language are this: "Hi. I'm from the government. I'm here to help."

Well, I can tell you something. The College of Trades will not be a help, but I will tell you this: A Progressive Conservative government under the leadership of Tim Hudak will be here to help. We will get rid of this College of Trades under the leadership of Tim Hudak.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member for Oakville has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to join the debate. It has created some controversy, and it should create controversy, because it's a very important issue. Most issues, I think, that are important to the people of the province of Ontario will garner a variety of opinions, and we're hearing that today. I think we're having a very healthy debate. I certainly am standing, right from the outset, to tell you that I'll be opposing this motion. I want to tell you why and I want to tell the people on TV why and I want to tell the people in the audience why: because what we're debating today is the continued existence of what has become an industry-driven governing body.

The idea is that we're going to help to modernize skills training in the province of Ontario. The reason we need to do that is that when we took over from the previous government in 2003, there were only 60,000 apprentices in the province of Ontario. Today, nine or 10 years later, we've managed to increase that to 120,000. We should be extremely proud of that, but the fact is, Madam Speaker, that it's simply not enough. The demand for skilled trades in the future in this province is going to exceed what we've done in the past. We need to do better.

1740

We asked people who are experts in the field in the province of Ontario on labour issues, on apprenticeship issues, people who have served under all three parties, who are respected by all sides on this issue. We asked them to go out into the community. We asked them to examine other jurisdictions in the world, and we asked them to come back to us with the best advice they could possibly give us. What they came back and they said to us was that the skilled trades in the province of Ontario have reached a level, have reached a state of maturity in their evolution that they should be able to take charge of their own destiny, that the people who have chosen to go into the skilled trades—which I think is a fantastic choice. I come from a family where my father was a skilled tradesperson. I think young people in the province of Ontario who have made the choice to go into the skilled trades have made an excellent career choice. What they need to do now is, they need to have control over their own future.

We're saying that, should decisions about your trade, about what you do every day for a living, whether you're a plumber, a steamfitter, whether you're an electrician or a hairdresser—who knows more about your industry? Who knows more about your job than you yourself? Is it a bureaucrat? Is it the government? It's not. It's you yourself. So what we're doing is, we're giving the College of Trades a greater role in the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Just turn it down.

The member for Oakville, continue.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker.

What we're doing is, we're giving the industry itself a greater role in how their particular industry sets standards, what the apprenticeship ratios should be, whether the trade should be a compulsory trade or not. These decisions in the past weren't made by the people in these seats today, Speaker. They were made by people in backrooms. They were made by politicians. They were made by bureaucrats. The best people to make these decisions are the people who are sitting in the seats here today.

When I look around the chamber today, I see members who are members of the College of Pharmacists. I see members who are members of the College of Teachers. Some members are from the college of doctors. The engineering society is here with us today. The law society is here with us today. Who from the other side is standing up and saying, "Let's get rid of the College of Pharmacists. Let's get rid of the College of Teachers. Let's get rid of the Law Society of Upper Canada"? No. In a very elite way, they're saying, "Let those colleges remain, but don't let any one of the people who have joined us today have their own college." Madam Speaker, that is shameful. That is shameful.

What we're saying is that this is a very important issue. We need to improve the number of apprentices we have in the province of Ontario. If the future economy is going to flourish, we need to get more young people into the skilled trades. Who knows better how to do that than people who are in the skilled trades themselves who have made that decision themselves? They are the people who I think should be making the decisions that we have before us today.

There's another aspect of the college—before I close, Speaker—that hasn't been talked about today. We've been joined today in the House by Peter Silverman. Everybody, I think, from every side and every party in this House knows the work that this man has done to make sure the consumers in the province of Ontario get a fair shake. What did Peter Silverman do? He called us and said, "You know what? I'm in favour of this. I've seen what happens on a daily basis by unscrupulous people in the province of Ontario"—not the people who have joined us here today—"people who will go out and cheat consumers; people who will go out and misrepresent themselves." What Mr. Silverman tells me and is telling all of you is that this province needs the College of Trades.

Any move to try to destroy the College of Trades at this time is simply self-serving politicking. I think these guys can see through you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: You know, Madam Speaker, I came to this Legislature with a great deal of optimism, but I unfortunately feel very disappointed by what I've heard today. I'm hearing lots of examples, lots of members from the Liberals and the NDP talking about being "taken to the cleaners." Why are the Liberals and the NDP focusing on the negative? Why aren't they focusing

on the promise of our trades, building schools, building roads, building bridges, building hospitals? They're doing a great job for the people of the province of Ontario. If someone isn't doing their job, we don't need to create more bureaucracy to fix it. We have to strengthen consumer protection. So if that's really the issue that you want to focus on, why aren't you strengthening consumer protection?

I want to talk about two constituents in my riding. Their names are Paul and Angela. Paul came to this country in 1968. I know a lot of people in this Legislature have heard similar stories about people who came overseas with very little—basically the shirts on their backs. He came to this country with a trade. He met his bride, Angela, and they built a family together. They had two children. They lived in Ontario. They built a good life for their family. They lived, and continue to live, in a modest home. They put their kids through school. They bought cars. We had a good life.

Paul and Angela's oldest son ended up becoming an engineer. He married an anaesthesiologist. They have two kids.

Madam Speaker, their other son graduated too. He married a psychologist. He finished a PhD and, at the age of 32, that son became the member for Cambridge. I owe a lot of success because my father had a trade, and he didn't need a College of Trades to build that life. What he needed was a job. He came in 1968 and retired in 2007. There was no College of Trades. There was a strong Ontario—a good job that was able to provide a good, solid foundation for me in my life as an MPP.

We don't need a College of Trades. We need to get this province moving again so people who are in despair can finally have a job to provide for their kids, to build a life that I had as a person—and I hope that people understand that it takes a lot of effort and a lot of sacrifice, moving halfway around the world to build a solid life so that your kids could have a better future. That's what I want for my kids.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that there's a lot I could say about this very issue, but I want to conclude on this note—because the member for Simcoe North has done a tremendous job supporting the trades, supporting apprentices, supporting young people who actually want to work and provide a good life for themselves and their family. So, to the people of Ontario, I think we all deserve to stand up and give praise to Garfield Dunlop, the member for Simcoe North, who's done a tremendous job.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Dunlop has moved opposition day motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
McMeekin, Ted

Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those who oppose the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo

Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine

McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Natyshak, Taras

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 35; the nays are 48.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There is no further business. This House stands adjourned until 9 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1802.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jacek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
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McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
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Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor-Tecumseh	

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Grant Crack, Kim Craiton
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Dipika Damerla, Steven Del Duca
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Monte McNaughton
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Bas Balkissoon, Rick Bartolucci
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Mike Colle, Rosario Marchese
Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day (pro tem.)

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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Laura Albanese, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Joe Dickson, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Paul Miller
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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Laura Albanese, Teresa J. Armstrong
Steven Del Duca, Bob Delaney
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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Steve Clark, Mike Colle
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
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Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
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Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
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Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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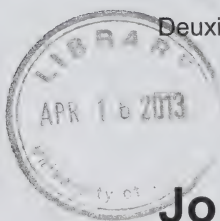
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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature



Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 11 April 2013

Jeudi 11 avril 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 11 April 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 11 avril 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 9, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / *Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to participate in the debate once again on Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act. This bill, as everyone knows, has been revived by the Liberals after their same legislation, Bill 50, died with prorogation. As many of my colleagues have pointed out during this debate, if this was such an important bill and not simply a way to deflect from the Ornge scandal, then why did the government shut the place down for four months and prorogue the House? Obviously, this bill wasn't and isn't that important.

I'm pleased to engage in this debate today. It comes with some apprehension, though, on my part as, quite frankly, it's beginning to seem like Groundhog Day around here: We have the same member introducing the same legislation that has already been vigorously debated over the past year from which extensive input, from our party's perspective, has been garnered. Despite our clear and concrete concerns having been brought forward, we are here now again, having the exact same debate about the exact same legislation as if the original debate never ever happened. None of our observations about the failures of Bill 50 and the failures of this government were ever incorporated into this successor bill, Bill 11; none of them.

So let me use my time today to reiterate what the opposition has been saying time and time again. Maybe this time the Liberals will listen. This legislation as it is, quite honestly, is a useless piece of legislation that is no more than window dressing by the health minister and this gov-

ernment to hide behind and use as a distraction for their mismanagement and failed leadership into yet another spending scandal. It's ridiculous for the health minister to stand up and pretend that her government didn't have oversight abilities to intervene at Ornge. It doesn't even make sense.

The fact of the matter is that both the Independent Health Facilities Act and the original Ornge performance agreement stipulate that the Minister of Health has had, has always had, the ability to send inspectors into Ornge and the ability to take over the board. If the minister had checked with her legal team, she would have been told exactly that. As a former Minister of Health, I can tell you that I used the Independent Health Facilities Act on at least four occasions I can think of offhand to rein in potential problems at agencies. Ornge is no different. The government, including cabinet, has a lot of powers and can override just about any agreement in the province if they so want. They have that authority.

Also, past testimony from various witnesses in government has confirmed that the Ornge performance agreement stipulates that the ministry could and, in fact, was mandated to provide oversight but failed to do so. Various experts have testified to this in committee.

In an exchange between my colleague Mr. Frank Klees, from Newmarket–Aurora, and the director of the emergency health services branch, Mr. Malcolm Bates, you will see that Mr. Bates agrees that the performance agreement allowed for ministry oversight. Let me read parts of their exchange from Hansard.

Mr. Klees says to Mr. Bates: "Nowhere in that performance agreement that I can see, unless you can point me to it, does it in any way relieve the Ministry of Health, and specifically the emergency health services branch responsible for air ambulance or ambulance services in the province, of its oversight responsibilities. In fact, there are very specific references to reporting that's required, to oversight responsibilities."

Mr. Bates's response: "I agree that the Ministry of Health and the emergency health services branch have and had oversight responsibilities and that oversight responsibility was basically set in line by the Ambulance Act, by the performance agreement and by the transfer-of-payment accountability directive."

Mr. Speaker, the inadequate oversight of Ornge is also well documented by Auditor General Jim McCarter. In a press release from last March, the auditor says, "The Ontario government has given Ornge more than \$700 million since 2006 to provide ambulance service in the province without sufficiently monitoring how well Ornge

was doing its job or whether it was following appropriate public sector business practices.”

In fact, the auditor’s report revealed that the Ministry of Health never even requested the information needed to meet the standards they themselves set, when Ornge was created, to monitor its performance. The auditor’s report clearly notes that the red flag warnings about financial irregularities and concerns over patient safety were not taken seriously by the government, and that the Minister of Health, Deb Matthews, knew about the problems, was able to intervene and simply chose not to.

In Ontario, our parliamentary system dictates that cabinet ministers bear the ultimate responsibility for the actions of their ministry. They are responsible for ensuring the services that the ministry pays for are provided effectively and in a way that meet the needs of the public, and in this case the health care system. This clearly was not happening at Ornge. The minister’s refusal to take responsibility for ignoring these repeated warnings goes against hundreds of years of parliamentary convention and our democratic system of government, and really should not be tolerated.

If the minister is not up to the job, it is the government’s responsibility to find someone who is, and that is what should have been done in this case, Mr. Speaker. Instead, as we all know, the health minister is still the health minister, and in fact she was recently promoted to Deputy Premier. The health minister’s failure to act shows her incompetence as a leader. If we can’t trust her to oversee ambulance services, which are a relatively small portion of her multi-billion dollar ministry portfolio, how can we trust her with the rest of it and how can we trust her with this bill?

Ornge was created by this government and was neglected by this government. They’ve never explained to the people of the province why they created Ornge and threw thousands of pilots and paramedics out of work, particularly across northern Ontario with the fixed-wing aspect of the service and the helicopter aspect of the service. Somehow George Smitherman made some deal. There’s something about all this that they’ve never explained why they threw out the old system, which was working perfectly fine, and brought in this new, Liberal system.

Mr. Speaker, I don’t see how Bill 11 will address the fact that the government has never explained themselves or the fact that we should never have gone down this road in the first place. In fact, I fear this will merely help the Liberals further cover up the scandal and future scandals like it. One of the weakest parts of Bill 11 is that it perpetuates the existing structure of the air ambulance service—that’s the Ornge structure—rather than recognizing that it is flawed and acknowledging that it may benefit from ministerial oversight or oversight from some other entity outside of Ornge.

If the government was serious about improving accountability, you’d think this would be at the top of their list, but it doesn’t seem to be the case. In a recent letter we received from the Ombudsman, Mr. André Marin, he

urges the government for Ombudsman oversight at Ornge, and I think he makes a good case.

0910

I’d like to read the letter into the record:

“I am writing further to the first reading of Bill 11, the Ambulance Amendment Act (Air Ambulances).

“There is no doubt that any steps to increase the accountability of the air ambulance service is welcomed. Indeed, in the wake of many stories of maladministration horrors that have plagued Ornge, sound public policy to bring proper oversight to this organization is still sorely needed.

“While moving in the right direction, measures such as the establishment of an Ornge patient advocate and Bill 11’s creation of a new bureaucracy of ‘special investigators’ are insufficient to provide much-needed scrutiny, and continue to shield Ornge from Ombudsman oversight. My office remains unable to address any individual or systemic issues involving Ornge.

“The Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario is a unique resource to support the Legislative Assembly in holding government accountable. It is there to allow the provincial Parliament to scrutinize government bodies. I cannot think of a more persuasive case for this than Ornge.

“‘Special investigators,’ under Bill 11, would enjoy authority similar to that of my office when it investigates the more than 500 ministries, agencies, boards, commissions, tribunals and corporations that fall under our jurisdiction. But there is an important difference: The ‘special investigators’ would report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.” They would not report to someone independent of government.

Anyway, he goes on to make a very, very good case, and I think that should be an amendment to the bill. I think we’ve had umpteen speakers, certainly from the opposition benches, read the rest of Mr. Marin’s letter into the record and agree with his sentiments.

Again, the Ornge scandal is one of the great blights in the history of this province. This bill does not in any way fix the system. It’s tinkering. You brought it out even before we had hearings in the original Bill 50, so you didn’t even know, supposedly, what all the problems were. You still don’t. The hearings are still going on, yet you purport—the minister and several Liberals continually get up and tell us that this will fix the system. It won’t. You already had these powers; you failed to use them. You failed to be responsible and accountable. I mean, I stepped aside for 10 weeks as Minister of Health when one of my staff said something stupid to a reporter. That was called “ministerial responsibility”: You go to the penalty box even if it’s not your fault and you take responsibility not only for your immediate political staff but for the bureaucracy. You people—time after time, whether it’s gas plants, Ornge or eHealth, you just stay in your seats, keep getting your big paycheques; the limousine picks you up every day and brings you home every day. You have no accountability to the people of Ontario. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I was listening attentively to the member from Simcoe–Grey, and many of his views are some of the points that I actually spoke about in my previous notes as well, in the many times that I've had the opportunity to get up in regard to this bill. I'm going to try it in a different way and see if there's a reception to hearing a message.

Premièrement, quand on regarde cette situation, il faut qu'on soit prêt à reconnaître que c'est une erreur qui aurait pu être corrigée ou qui peut être corrigée. Le gouvernement doit prendre l'initiative, eux-mêmes, de vraiment corriger ce problème-là et puis de mettre des procédures en place où le problème ne se représenterait pas. Une des façons qu'on peut faire ça, c'est de faire certain que l'ombudsman est impliqué dans le futur pour qu'il ait les yeux et qu'il porte l'attention nécessaire à déterminer où le problème s'est présenté et comment le problème s'est présenté, parce que ce n'est pas acceptable aux familles qui ont souvent des questions, en effet, sur des sujets qui se passent à travers d'Ornge qu'ils n'ont pas les réponses nécessaires. C'est seulement à travers de la chance de passer à travers de l'ombudsman que ces questions-là vont être répondues et puis les personnes de leurs familles vont avoir les réponses nécessaires pour qu'elles puissent adresser leurs propres questions.

Le gouvernement a la chance présentement de corriger un problème et de retourner un niveau de crédibilité au système de santé. Ils devraient prendre avantage de cette situation. Quand on blâme quelqu'un, quand on fait cette action, il faut qu'on réalise qu'il y en a trois autres qui visent vers nous. On doit prendre l'initiative de vraiment implémenter les changements qui sont nécessaires pour faire le bon fonctionnement des actions et puis la législation ici en Ontario. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good morning, Speaker. I'm sure the people who are watching in television-land aren't quite sure right now whether they're watching a rerun from yesterday's 9 o'clock performance, the day before, or the day before that, because what has been said in this House on this particular bill has been said at least a hundred times over. We've now had 18 hours of debate on the bill.

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I allowed your member to speak; nobody heckled him. So please give somebody else an opportunity to say something as well.

There have now been 18 hours of debate on this particular bill, Speaker. I'm sure the people out there in television-land are wondering, have they got nothing else to talk about? There are so many other issues out there. Why don't we get on with it and send the bill to committee?

In committee there are representatives of all three parties. We're in a minority Parliament. If there are good suggestions from the opposition or from government members as to how this bill, the oversight bill on Ornge,

can be improved, that's the place to do it. But to keep raising the same arguments here day after day—when they well know that sooner or later this bill is going to be given second reading, and then it will go to committee. There are so many other issues to talk about that we should be dealing with for the welfare of the people of Ontario.

This is a very important bill, so let's get on with it. Let's send it to committee, let the committee do its work and let's bring it back here so that at the end of the day we will have a new Ambulance Act that will have the oversight provisions that are absolutely necessary for the safety of Ontarians—it's always first about safety—and for the welfare of the people of Ontario. So let's get on with it. Let's stop all this nonsense that has been going on here for the last 10 of those 18 hours, anyway. Let's get on with it and send the bill to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise and speak on this subject. It's difficult for me to pick the right adjective to compliment the member from Simcoe–Grey on his enlightening comments. We all know that this is just a ploy to deflect the attention away from the Minister of Health; this is what it is. We all know that the Minister of Health and the ministry had the oversight, that the rules were in place, that this really didn't have to happen and this is just a deflection away from the government's responsibility, as pointed out by the member from Simcoe–Grey. We are wasting time here, probably, because we don't need to be debating this bill. It shouldn't even have come up. Yet the government is using this tactic to deflect attention away from their incompetence.

I suggest that the member from Simcoe–Grey was right. He was a health minister in his previous years—an exemplary job as a health minister. I'm sure that when his comments are taken into account, we know that he's speaking from experience and knows what he's talking about. I would suggest that the health ministry and the health minister should look inward and see what happened and know that she had the ability to oversee Ornge and correct the problem before it even started. So this bill is something that is holding up government business, and probably we should get on to something else with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Simcoe–Grey, you have—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): My apologies; the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour for me to be able to stand here on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane and once again speak on Bill 11. I'd like to commend the member from Simcoe–Grey. He did bring a unique perspective because he was health minister under another regime, and brings a unique perspective.

I'd like to focus my comments on the comments of the Attorney General saying that we had already done this and this was a waste of time.

0920

One of the reasons we've already done this is because the government prorogued and killed this bill. They can have all the reasons they want, but if they really want to make this bill better, they could have taken that opportunity when we debated this before the government prorogued, and someone who drafts these bills for the minister could have said, "You know what? They brought up some good points in that debate, and maybe if we changed it, if we took this opportunity"—this isn't why they prorogued the government, but they could have taken this opportunity to make this bill better before it went to committee, and then we would have.

For the people at home, that's how we would run the government. We wouldn't prorogue. But they prorogued anyway, so make things better. But on this, they haven't. They've proposed exactly the same bill, and then they chastise the people on this side of the House when we try to tell them, "Here are the things you should change."

And yes, it feels like Groundhog Day because we've had to tell them twice. They had the opportunity to change while they prorogued, and they didn't take that opportunity.

This bill should go to committee. It's very unfortunate that the government didn't take their opportunity to make this bill better while they shut the Legislature down.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe-Grey, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank and agree with the members for Algoma-Manitoulin, Timiskaming-Cochrane and Perth-Wellington. And Timiskaming-Cochrane—the honourable gentleman makes the perfect argument, exactly. I mean, the government had four months, 100-and-some-odd days, 127 days I think, to change the bill, but you didn't listen. Stubborn, arrogant—the same old Liberal Party that we saw in the first nine years.

The fact of the matter is, as House leader, I can guarantee you that every one of my caucus is going to take their democratic right, and they're going to speak on this bill. In fact, they're going to speak on every bill until you get it right.

You treat this place with disdain by not listening to anybody on this side of the House. You don't change your ways. Then you get up and have the audacity to lecture us about our exercise of our democratic rights. We're trying to get you to listen for once. You don't listen. You don't take responsibility. You throw what used to be fairly sacred—

Interjection: Parliamentary.

Mr. Jim Wilson:—parliamentary procedure around here, which is to take ministerial responsibility—when the Liberals were in Ottawa, they did the same thing. They just ignore their scandals. You had Gomery inquiries.

Here, we have nobody taking responsibility for buying an election with over a billion dollars in the gas plant scandal. No one is taking responsibility for eHealth. I guess you threw out Mr. Caplan, I suppose. I met him the

other day—a fine gentleman who did not deserve to be the scapegoat on that. The rest of you sit here smugly, not taking responsibility, and then we have the Ornge scandal. If you think we're going to let any of these scandals go, we're going to keep going and going and going until somebody finally takes some responsibility on your side of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to thank the member from Simcoe-Grey, who was also the Minister of Health, for his courage to stand up and take responsibility on what he did as well.

It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. Let me say at the outset that it has been enlightening being here in the House over the last year to get a close-up view of the controversies boiling around Ornge. Watching the minister's footwork and listening to her wordplay has been especially instructive. To hear her tell it, she was just a patsy, bamboozled by forces beyond her understanding or control, and this from the head of the very ministry that helped to construct the house of cards.

I find it astonishing that when they were constructing their 2005 performance agreement, they couldn't agree on the matter of performance. The government didn't think to integrate measures that would ensure that the performance metrics of this agency were tracked at all, never mind on an ongoing basis to ensure that it was always delivering the best possible care. To listen to the Minister of Health tell it, that's just the way things turned out: unfortunate turn of events but nothing much that she, her ministry or this government could do about it. If you only had the minister's talking points to listen to, you might be convinced that the entire Ornge debacle was some kind of a fly-by-night operation that hoodwinked the province. But, of course, there are other accounts.

Speaker, it is extremely hard to look at Bill 11 as anything other than a wag-the-dog reaction to the Auditor General's scathing indictment of this government agency. It seems like it was created as a tool of deflection before anything else.

To her credit, the minister keeps up a bold front, doesn't stray from her talking points and always pays tribute to the men and women on the front lines at Ornge. I would naturally like to salute them as well. It's certainly not their fault that they were set adrift by this government. They went above and beyond, making the best of whatever they were given. I have enormous respect for the professionalism, expertise and composure of Ontario's first responders and front-liners. They hold our communities together whenever and wherever the fabric of our community is strained, frayed and torn by suffering and tragedy.

I would like to thank the whistle-blowers at Ornge who stood up for patients and Ontarians when the minister would not. Without their disclosures, we would only have learned a fraction of what we know now. The abuses

and indulgences might have been carried on without restraint, and this agency could have strayed further into the fog. The pilots, paramedics, engineers, dispatchers and administrators at Ornge should not become collateral damage for the mishaps and misdeeds of their masters.

Part of honouring those individuals, Speaker, is in remembering our own duty to be vigilant and critical when it comes to proposed legislation like Bill 11. Yet despite the central role that whistle-blowers have played in this sad and shocking tale—or perhaps because of that—the bill before us does not seem to attach much value to whistle-blowers. In fact, the legislation arguably reins in whistle-blowers by failing to extend across-the-board protection to all individuals. When you place restrictions on this kind of disclosure, you turn acts of conscience into thought crimes. How shameful is that? It speaks to a compromised allegiance to transparency and accountability. It suggests—dare I say it?—a certain moral cowardice. Speaker, anything less than comprehensive whistle-blower protection is simply a camouflaged muzzle law.

Ironically, what Bill 11 does best is underline the failures of this government and ministry. They are each uniquely flawed and yet they share one thing in common: They stood idly by, were blind to the red flags and deaf to appeals. There is no reason to believe that amended legislation or Febrezed performance agreements will change those fundamental failures of oversight.

We in the PC caucus have been clear about where responsibility ultimately falls, and we have always appreciated the exceptional level of care, compassion and professionalism that the staff first responders and frontliners at Ornge have brought to every working moment, despite the inefficiencies and perverse bureaucracy they have had to contend with. Factors like these cannot make the job of saving lives any easier, Speaker, and it is hard to imagine what benefit there is in avoiding the steps needed to ensure that performance issues and organizational problems are rooted out at every turn.

When it comes down to it, that is why the government's stubborn refusal to invest this bill with real measures to ensure accountability is so disappointing. The closest we get to transparency in Bill 11 is when the minister creates a mechanism for funneling compliments into her ear.

Speaker, I would be interested to know how the Ontario Ombudsman's heart rate charted when he read that section. Maybe his years of exposure to Liberal incompetence have made him resilient. In his letter to the Minister of Health, Ombudsman André Marin writes, "The Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario is a unique resource to support the Legislative Assembly in holding government accountable. It is there to allow the provincial Parliament to scrutinize government bodies. I cannot think of a more persuasive case for this than Ornge."

0930

Indeed, Speaker, after all that we in this Legislature have been through, I can see no credible reason for keeping this agency beyond the oversight of the Ombudsman.

That this new initiative is coming from the Deputy Premier signals to me that the party is not a new government at all but that it is still twisted by the same secretive DNA that characterized the McGuinty years.

Now, as then, we're seeing this government's head in the sand, completely out of touch with this critical component of the most resource-intensive ministry of the entire government. They didn't think to question, couldn't be bothered to use the tools at their disposal, indulged the worst in their midst and naively hoped for the best—that nobody would find out and that nothing would go terribly wrong.

When we talk about the excesses at Ornge we are not just talking about an unthinkable waste of precious resources and the haphazard management of a critical link in our health care sector. There is also an excess of arrogance, as if anything was possible and nothing would ever suffer consequences. This government had every authority and had the tools needed to wade in this organization and get it sorted. We've heard numerous times during this debate that the Minister of Health had the power to intervene at any point to stop the circus, to bring the sideshow to a halt and to restore balance and discipline. The lack of leadership is striking.

There were clear and repeated warnings about Ornge, warnings about a dark whirlpool of finance irregularities, awestruck accounts of sky-high executive salaries and grave details about operational shortcomings that put the lives of staff and patients at risk. All of it was brushed under the carpet with a merry whistle by the highest-ranking members of this government. It's shameful—shameful.

Where was the leadership years ago when the seeds of this scandal were first scattered on the wind? And where is the leadership from this government now? Is Bill 11 really the best you've got? If so, this government has not truly learned the lessons of Ornge. I would have hoped that this party opposite, which went out of its way in the throne speech to try and rebrand itself as a "new government," would have taken the four months the Legislature was closed and done some soul-searching, gone back through the hours of debate on Bill 50 and come up with revised legislation that was serious and strong. But they did not, and that speaks volumes of what this government really cares about. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: As always, I'm honoured to stand up today on behalf of my constituents in Davenport. I do feel a bit of remorse that this is the, I don't know, the millionth time I've stood to speak to this issue. As we've said on numerous occasions, this bill is not going to address the lack of accountability in other agencies across the province that need attention. We feel assured that Ornge, from this day on, will be under close scrutiny, but there has been a slow death, I would say, of transparency—well, of accountability—in this province, an infatuation with off-loading responsibility and with deregulation.

So, rather than take any more time up in this House today speaking, I think I would just ask the House to join me in a minute of silence to think about how we can do this—how we can run this province in a better way that is accountable.

I will just stand for a minute and think about that—the province that we could build together.

Thank you, Speaker. I found that helpful.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: We've heard a lot of criticism of this bill and the predecessor, Bill 50, I think it was. But having sat on the public accounts committee—and I even did a tour of the headquarters of Ornge yesterday. But this has been going on for some time.

Carole McKeogh, who is the senior lawyer for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, had nothing to do with the first agreement, which brought in a fresh look and said, "How do we repair that?" Carole McKeogh was in front of the committee, under oath, twice. She said on April 25, 2012, "I have also been involved in the development of Bill 50"—which is the predecessor of this—"An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, which received first reading on March 21, 2012. The proposed legislation, if passed, would provide the province with many of the same powers for intervention in the public interest which currently exist for public hospitals under the Public Hospitals Act"—so are we going to change all those acts that govern hospitals?

"In my view, there is a useful comparison to be made between public hospitals and Ornge. Both hospitals and Ornge are non-profit corporations. They are both charities with volunteer boards. They both provide essential health services to patients and are funded almost entirely by the province.

"However, in the case of public hospitals, the legislative framework includes the power to intervene in the governance of a hospital through the appointment of a hospital supervisor, who can assume all the powers of the board and the corporation. This is viewed as an extraordinary power of intervention which exists to protect the public interest. It is an important safeguard which has been included in the proposed legislation for Ornge."

This is good legislation. It was prepared by Carole McKeogh. She testified twice that it was the right thing to do. We know that it is the right thing to do. It's a good piece of legislation. Let's get it to committee and give Ornge the other part of their ability to move ahead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to stand in respect for the member from Burlington, who I think had spent a fair amount of time pointing out in detail the lack of respect, lack of leadership and lack of action.

I think that our side and the earlier speaker, the member from Simcoe-Grey, a former Minister of Health, added content that the viewers today, or those following the transcripts, would need to recognize: that there has been a lack of responsibility and leadership.

Now I should say out of respect for the front-line people at Ornge and the paramedics who were here yesterday that it's clear that they were ignored and vilified as well. They were all painted by the leadership under Chris Mazza, and all the way down, of taking advantage of taxpayers' money in this whole scandalous scheme around Ornge.

I want to pay respect for the member from Newmarket-Aurora for the work and leadership that he has done, and to the media, who in fact have shown this to be the scandal that it is.

The member from Burlington—I believe the detailed content of her speech is worth looking up in Hansard online and refreshing the memory of why are we so upset with this waste of taxpayers' money and, more specifically, health care dollars. It troubles me when I look at seniors unable to get long-term care, unable to get home care, and yet there's this wasteful spending of millions and millions and millions of dollars on the equipment, the leadership, the governance—it's simply unacceptable. I would expect that the Minister of Health would read these transcripts and apologize to this Legislature. That's how strongly I feel about it.

The way it has been trivialized is another example of not taking responsibility for their lack of action.

0940

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, an honour to be able to stand on behalf of my good people in Timiskaming-Cochrane and make a few comments about those from the member from Burlington.

She spent part of her talk focusing on the Ombudsman. We don't agree on a lot of things, but I think on that one we agree, and I'd like to give you an example, because it was someone whose family lives in my riding and who was a very early whistle-blower on Ornge. His name was Trevor Kidd. When he came to testify at the committee, everybody was happy that he came and testified. He sat in this House and everyone clapped for him. He tried to warn people for years—for years—and he was vilified. He was sloughed off. The Ornge scandal didn't come to people's attention until the media took it.

So now, on the next Ornge—because there will be. No one's perfect, and this is a big organization. Governments are big organizations and people are people. So the next time, and if this is the model we're going to use, then someone like Trevor is going to have to find the special investigator or have to convince these people who have been put in there by the ruling party, whoever that may be.

Wouldn't it have been so much better if people like Trevor could have called the Ombudsman, someone who they felt was impartial? The Ombudsman will get some calls that don't come to fruition, because that's the thing about being a whistle-blower. Every time we think you've been wronged, it's not always right, but at least it would be a place where people could call impartially without fear of retribution, and we can't figure out why the government doesn't want to go that way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Burlington, you have two minutes for a response.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much, Speaker. I'm up for my last hit here and I'd like to point out a couple of things.

I'd like to say that, being an MPP, we have many mentors. I look at the member from Newmarket–Aurora and the member from Nickel Belt, and what they have done to bring this to fruition has been humbling to me over and over again. It's an honour to see the two of these people work diligently. The passion they have, that they believe in, is overwhelming to myself. I stand here as a PC to be part of this process with the Newmarket–Aurora member, and I am so grateful that you are part of this team. I would like to say that first.

I would also like to say to the Attorney General that it is our responsibility as the Queen's loyal opposition to be continuing to do what needs to be done for the Ontario people. I had someone the other day ask me, "Why are you still talking about gas plants and Ornge, and why is this still going on?" I said, "Listen, this is why it's going on. We have a responsibility, when we spend \$1.8 million more an hour than we take in, and 20% of what we spend is borrowed money, and it's our third-largest expenditure after health and education, to make sure that every single dollar that we've wasted that we could have been putting on the front line to people, because of the government's reckless mismanagement of money, has put us in a position that these people—there's no money."

So how is it that you can patronize and look over at us? I have never been so proud to be part of Tim Hudak's team, the leader of this opposition, who has a plan and who has the most phenomenal team here that comes together and works as hard as we possibly can—and in this whole House the only one with a plan—to do what is best for this government.

Thank you so much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in my place to speak to Bill 11. The purpose of this bill is to provide oversight and accountability over the Ornge air ambulance service. I cannot support Bill 11 for three reasons: Bill 11 does not provide complete protection for whistle-blowers, Bill 11 does not allow independent oversight of Ornge by the Ombudsman, and Bill 11 does not change the flawed corporate structure of Ornge. I will come back to my criticisms of the bill after providing some context.

Bill 11 is a road map of what the minister should have done in response to concerns that were raised years ago. The minister has had the power all along to stop the malfeasance at Ornge, so we don't need Bill 11. The calls for a ministerial investigation into Ornge came first in 2008, five years ago, then in 2010 and again in 2011. In March 2012, a majority of the members of this House voted to form a select committee to investigate serious allegations of misconduct at Ornge. Even though the

health minister promised that, "I support the will of this Legislature" and "The will of the Legislature rules supreme," the select committee on Ornge has never been formed by this government.

Nonetheless, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts has been relentlessly investigating this issue for well over 100 hours now, and has slowly but surely been pulling the story of the Ornge scandal out for its full public airing.

In 2005, the responsibility for Ontario's air ambulance service was changed forever. It was entrusted to a start-up company headed by an emergency doctor who was a recent MBA graduate from university. This was Ornge under the direction of its founder, Dr. Chris Mazza.

As an aside, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind everyone that the other founder of this corporation is this current provincial government.

Before 2005, Dr. Mazza worked at Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto, which happened to be the base hospital for Ontario's air ambulance service; Mazza was exposed to the air ambulance business. At that time, a few small airlines and one large helicopter company worked on contract for the Ministry of Health. The 25-person team at Sunnybrook called in a plane or a helicopter when required. As part of their contract with the ministry, the companies outfitted their aircraft as air ambulances. Ornge was Mazza's brainchild to fix Ontario's air ambulance service. Dr. Mazza had no experience running a corporate operation like this, let alone an operation with a budget of \$150 million.

By 2004, Dr. Mazza had sold the McGuinty Liberal government on his plan. Mazza became the president and chief executive officer of Ontario's new air ambulance service. This Liberal government took a hands-off approach from the beginning. In a couple of years, the government allowed Mazza and his board of directors to change a 25-person operation run out of a provincial hospital facility into a 234-person corporation housed in a \$15-million building that the employees called "the crystal palace," miles away from a hospital. Where the old air ambulance service used contracted airlines, Dr. Mazza thought it best to purchase 12 custom helicopters from Italy for \$144 million and a fleet of 10 single-engine aircraft from Switzerland.

By 2011, Ornge had grown into a not-for-profit corporation with many for-profit subsidiary corporations, employing over 400 people, including several vice-presidents and executives, managers, dispatchers, paramedics, pilots and aviation specialists. It had its own air and land ambulances operated from 12 bases across the province.

The Auditor General's report of March 2012 regarding Ornge was scathing in its criticism of this Liberal money pit. The Auditor General, Mr. Jim McCarter, said Ornge was, "one of the most difficult auditees we have ever encountered." He was speaking from nine years of experience and commenting on the lack of co-operation from Mazza and his employees.

The complexity of the corporate structures at Ornge and its subsidiaries are still being untangled by investi-

gators. Deaths that occurred on Ornge's watch are still being investigated by Ontario's new chief coroner. This investigation was put on hold last fall when the old chief coroner suddenly became the new CEO of Ornge. We are also still waiting for the results of investigations by the OPP.

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Since 2006, over \$750 million in public health care dollars have funded this government's start-up. In 2011, Ornge was \$300 million in debt. Non-profit corporations and charities were set up to benefit a number of for-profit corporate entities. Public funds were used to leverage investments in the for-profit companies. The scheme was to generate funding for the Ornge non-profits. It was doomed from the start. One Ornge for-profit subsidiary kept 97% of its profits and only returned 3% to the public purse. Dr. Mazza was enabled by his board of directors, so the culpability is not singular. Many perks flowed to senior staff members at Ornge as well, although the main beneficiary was Dr. Mazza. In 2005, Mazza's salary was \$284,000. By 2011, his salary had grown to \$1.4 million, and grew to \$2.6 million by the time he was fired in February 2012.

In the last month at public accounts committee, we have learned that Mazza got the board to purchase life insurance policies for him. The latest policy uncovered was a \$10-million policy on Mazza, with the beneficiary being one of Ornge's for-profit entities. We have learned that Mazza went so far as to design the interiors of the new helicopters, but this led to them being too small for paramedics to perform CPR in flight. We have learned of intravenous tubing incompatible with hospital tubing. We learned of \$1 million spent on patient movers for the airplane fleet that are too heavy for the aircraft. We learned of possible kickback payments to a helicopter manufacturer which is now being investigated over a similar deal with India. We also learned of dispatch problems and of Mazza's policy of preventing Ornge helicopters from attending a distress call until it was determined that their presence was absolutely necessary. It is clear this government agency was allowed to forget about its core mandate.

Mazza got Ornge to pay for his million-dollar home and fine cars, \$150,000 for two custom motorcycles from California, a \$40,000 speedboat and his jet-setting lifestyle. He even submitted the interest on his credit card as an expense. Mazza got his girlfriend a job and a free MBA education. Public health care dollars were frittered away like this on the government's watch.

Lives most certainly have been put at risk because of this minister's shortcomings. She turned a blind eye until she was forced to look. The people who forced her to look were the whistle-blowers, the Ornge employees who couldn't hold back the truth any longer and put their livelihoods on the line. In fact, right now there is an Ornge employee suing the company for being fired after she co-operated with the ongoing investigation. We wouldn't know anything about these problems without these people. Bill 11 fails to provide real protection for

employees in the future who would come forth with information that we need as legislators.

The best way to provide for independent oversight and accountability in government service delivery is by allowing the Ombudsman to investigate. The government won't let him. With Bill 11, the government is trying to get away with only mandating an internal complaint resolution process. This provides neither independent oversight nor real accountability.

Lastly, another problem with this bill is the fact that it leaves in place Ornge's corporate structure, which was criticized by the Auditor General.

Again, Bill 11 is too little too late. Bill 11 is nothing but a cover-up for this government's failure to responsibly manage the Ornge air ambulance service. Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Not only is the bill not competent at doing what they set out to do, but you have to realize that when it came to Ornge, it's not that the ministry could not act; it's that the minister chose not to. All they had to do was to put a Liberal-friendly face at the front of the parade. It didn't matter what was going on behind. It didn't matter that money was being squandered, that for-profit companies were being set up with taxpayers' money. It didn't matter what was going on; they had a Liberal-friendly face at the front of the parade telling them, "All is good," and nobody did anything. It doesn't matter that the bill gives the minister opportunities to do more. She had opportunities to act, and she refused to do that.

Now they're asking us to approve a bill that will give the minister all sorts of powers that we have never seen in the health care system before. But if you refuse to act on the power you already have, what's the point in giving more power? If there had been a Liberal-friendly face at the front of this parade, it doesn't matter how much she can act; she refused to.

One thing would set that apart, though, as the member has said, and that's bringing Ombudsman oversight. As those complaints start to come in, an independent third party—the Ombudsman doesn't care if there's a Liberal-friendly face at the front of the parade. The Ombudsman only cares if there are people that think they have been wronged. He will use his power to investigate. But the bill does not include Ombudsman oversight.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me thank the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills for making a contribution to the debate this morning on Bill 11.

A couple of things of interest here: Dr. Mazza was originally hired by the then Minister of Health, Mr. Clement, in his role at Sunnybrook Health Sciences hospital. We do know that one Lynne Golding, of course, billed \$9 million for doing work for Ornge during a long period of time.

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Look, that was the record that was brought before the public accounts committee.

In fact, what we need here—we've heard from both sides of the House that they want to look at amendments to bring Ombudsman oversight in. The fact of the matter is this is the kind of very productive work that can be done at the committee level. That will be the opportunity to take Bill 11 and get it to committee. Both parties, the opposition party and the third party, will have a slew of amendments they want to bring to the table. The government inevitably will have some other amendments to make. That's the kind of process that we need to get in place—on to committee. Let's listen to those thoughtful amendments, both from the opposition and from the third party, and incorporate them into an amended Bill 11 and get it back to the House, because we all want the opportunity for increased oversight.

We have made some moves. We've done important work: a new board, new CEO.

We're quite privileged in Peterborough: We have a land-based Ornge group in Peterborough that assists Peterborough regional health care centre. We have the helipad there. When the helicopters do come in, we get them from both sides, coming in from Ottawa and indeed from Toronto to provide accessibility often for traumatic situations.

Let's get it to committee, and let's get the amendments in place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to add a few comments to those which my colleague has already made. There are a couple of things that I think need to be emphasized in this whole process.

The first one is one that I don't think has received an adequate amount of attention; that is that we had a functioning air ambulance service in this province. It was a system that worked well. It provided the kind of emergency services that were needed, particularly in areas of small populations where you had to get people out quickly. They are collateral damage, by the way, in this conversation about the air ambulance process because they had certainly suffered from the imposition of Ornge.

The other thing that I think is important to keep in mind in this conversation is the absolution of this government from taking any responsibility. The fact that they turned the other way, the fact that the auditor provided a scathing report in the fall of 2011 and the fact that they had been asked questions in the House for several years on this file all add up to a complete absolution from taking any responsibility. What we see is a whole series of people through an internal hierarchy that all turned the other way.

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One of the things that is the essence of this bill, in my view, is a demonstration that you can't legislate morality. If people are going to turn the other way, if they're going to pass the buck, if they're going to pretend everything is all right, if they're going to use everything as a photo op and not as anything of substance, then this bill will be no

better than anything else that we have had. It is the measure of the people who are enforcing it—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, I'm standing on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane talking about Bill 11. I think the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills did a fair job of explaining some of the problems that happened at Ornge, but I'd like to spend a moment and talk about what the member from Nickel Belt said, because what she said is at the essence of this whole problem, and she did a really good job of it. What I heard her say was that the problem here is that tools were available for the government to act and they chose not to. Now what they're trying to do is make the tools a lot stronger to act.

Again, in other areas, in Ornge or in the other Ornges that are out there, they can still choose not to act because it took them a long time to act or react. At the end of the day, when they reacted, it was because of media pressure. That tells a lot. Their initial reaction was to sweep it under the carpet. That was their initial reaction.

The fact that they are resisting Ombudsman oversight tells me—and I think the member from Nickel Belt did a very good job of explaining this—that their continued reaction is to avoid, to sweep under the carpet. It just makes so much sense. Why should we be here arguing about whether the Ombudsman should be able to look into things or that someone should be able to call the Ombudsman? Why? It makes no sense. That should have just been put in the bill. It just shows that the government continues to avoid and deflect.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It is a bit of a sad thing that we have to spend so much time talking about this problem in this House. We have a second bill to address one problem, which should never have happened. We were pro-rogued and stopped from doing a thorough investigation into the correction of the problem in the beginning, a problem that never should have happened in the beginning because the responsibility of the government was to oversee and manage this properly and catch it before it got carried away.

We have a manager, Dr. Mazza, who feels he should be paid over \$2 million a year and that his girlfriend should be hired and paid as an executive because she was a very good water ski instructor, apparently. Motorcycles, speedboats, high-living styles, new office buildings and massive amounts of money spent, and we have a billion dollars gone.

I want to digress a little bit. Last night I had the privilege to speak to some fine young men at a reception here, the paramedics of Ontario. I spoke to a young man who impressed me by how professional he was, how proud he is of what he does. They are the front-line troops of the ambulance service of Ontario. They want to have legislation written here to create a licensing body to ensure the integrity of the profession and the work they

do. It's just a shame when you think of those good people tarnished by what happens and what this party has done to them. I think it's a travesty. We have great people in the front lines and in the middle management of Ornge, and yet we have this terrible management at the top that wasted money and delivered poor service, and a government that is unwilling and unable to face the music that they were irresponsible and just didn't do the job.

I would like to thank the other members who commented on my talk—from Nickel Belt, from Peterborough, from York-Simcoe and from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to join in the debate on Bill 11. I'm sure it's going to come as no surprise to any of the members that, like my PC colleagues, I'm very disappointed with this bill. I'm disappointed because, leaving aside everything that's gone wrong at Ornge, this legislation was an opportunity to finally get something right when it comes to—sorry, let me correct that: It was the second time we could have got something right with Ornge; the first time was back before the Premier shuttered this Legislature for four months. At that time, Bill 11 was known as Bill 50, and that's why I'm so disappointed that after four months of having an opportunity to take into consideration what the opposition was saying, this government just went right back, didn't listen to our input and put forward a bill that was exactly where we were before the Legislature prorogued.

That's my concern: that we had some very insightful and constructive criticism that the minister could have taken, but simply what she's done is, she's just changed the numbers of the bill. It's the same bill. It's almost like the debate that we had on the previous bill didn't happen. That's unfortunate, because I think it sends a message to us in the opposition that the minister wasn't listening to those very constructive suggestions that we made.

It's really no surprise, though, I have to say, because a number of bills that this government has put forward are essentially window-dressing bills. It's pretty shocking that a government that really makes such a big deal about being open for input from the opposition would act with such arrogance and disregard to the other side of the room. Really, what it says to me is that the Premier and her cabinet talk a good game about co-operation, but when it comes into practice, there is none.

What we see here is Bill 11. Again, time after time, we see the fact that this government makes these changes; they just change some numbers and the bill gets put back on. It really shows to me that this whole issue with Ornge is really a damning indictment of this government, and the fact that the cupboard is so bare of ideas that, in terms of this bill, we get leftovers—I think we all saw what was on the government's agenda; on their menu, so to speak—when they tabled Bill 50. We talked about this bill, but again, the ingredients of this bill are the same.

I do want to, as part of the debate, go into some comments that I hear frequently about our system from my constituents in Leeds-Grenville. Like all Ontarians, the

residents that I serve have zero tolerance for government waste. They work hard to earn a living, and they demand that the increasingly large portion of their incomes going to Queen's Park be treated with respect. But probably more than any other area, what really gets my constituents upset is when they see their health care dollars squandered on scandals like Ornge. That's because at the same time as they're reading these scandals, they see their access to front-line health care services being diminished. Whether it's home care, waiting times for specialists, dental care for low-income residents and seniors, or hospice service, I have an increasingly large number of calls coming into my office from constituents who are very concerned about the state of health care, not just in Leeds-Grenville, but also in the province as a whole.

When I write to the minister about these concerns, invariably I'm told about the fiscal challenges that the province faces. Certainly, I understand how deep a hole this government has put the people of Ontario into. It's something that, certainly, our party talks about practically every day in this place, and we urge the government to do something and really change the course that this government is on. My constituents have a very simple question when they're told there's no money for health care. They want to know, if funds are so scarce and their access to care is in fact suffering, why have millions of dollars been wasted on Ornge and why has a billion dollars been wasted on eHealth?

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If you're a mom in my riding whose daughter needs an appointment for a neurologist because she's starting drug treatments for MS, and she's told that she has to wait 18 months because there's no money—but if eHealth bureaucrats want to wine and dine someone to the tune of \$120,000, that's no problem. That infuriates those constituents. Or if the former head of Ornge, Dr. Mazza, needs 15 grand for a ski trip to Whistler or 50 grand to have an Orange County Chopper decorate the lobby of the Ornge offices, we can spare no expense, and that's what infuriates people. It's disgusting, and they have every right, through their elected representatives here at Queen's Park, to demand accountability.

But, again, when it comes to Ornge, no one seems to take responsibility over on the government benches. In fact, the Premier has shown she's ready to move on. Not only has she kept the minister in her portfolio, she's promoted her to Deputy Premier, and I think that sends the absolute wrong message after we've had this type of debate, when Ornge and Ministry of Health employees have clearly articulated that the minister had powers of oversight and chose not to use them. I think it's tragic.

I do want to take the opportunity, because he's in the House, to thank our member, the member for Newmarket-Aurora, for really shining a light on what's happening at Ornge. I think he and other of our representatives on public accounts have done a fabulous job. To you, Mr. Klees, thank you for shining the light on this power.

I also believe that we've been very clear on this side when it comes to the powers of oversight. The minister

didn't act, and I think the fact now is that in terms of the Ombudsman, there needs to be a role for the Ombudsman, and I think what I'm hearing is the Wynne government, similar to the McGuinty government, has no interest in providing that level of transparency and accountability that I think we need to see in this bill.

I've heard a lot from government members during this debate about the appointment of the new patient advocate at Ornge. I had to laugh when I read the minister's comments in a recent Toronto Star article as she desperately tried to explain why she was resisting the call for Ombudsman oversight. I couldn't believe this. She actually had the audacity to state that an internal patient advocate would ensure that concerns are handled more quickly and expeditiously. The problem with that scenario, Speaker, is that the patient advocate would be reporting to the exact same folks who ignored the alarm bells the last time around. And as the Ombudsman, Mr. Marin, pointed out in the same article, one of the duties of the patient advocate would be to report compliments about Ornge, hardly a role for someone who is supposed to be the watchdog.

I know that despite opposition calls both when it was Bill 50 and now Bill 11, we don't seem to be able to get the minister's full attention. Otherwise, anything to do with the concerns about mismanagement and patient safety I think would fall on deaf ears, without that extra oversight, and we would need to have that put into place.

I can't really sum up the problems with this oversight as envisioned by the minister better than by quoting a letter that Mr. Marin wrote to her: The patient advocate, he wrote, "would not be independent of government. Far from being watchdogs, they would operate on a ministerial dog leash." If you want to ensure Ornge or eHealth doesn't happen again, you don't put the watchdogs on a leash; you don't do that. I think most people on this side of the House have been advocating that we need to let the watchdogs do their work. Clearly this government ignored us in this process, whether it be Bill 50 or Bill 11, and I take great offence for some members opposite trying to take away our democratic right to debate legislation.

We as members get elected to debate legislation and to provide comments, and I think that the government is losing sight of that. Bill 11 doesn't do anything to provide better oversight. Certainly, I'm not going to stand here, as I represent the people of Leeds-Grenville—I'm not supporting this legislation.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise on behalf of Jeff Yurek, MPP for Elgin—Middlesex—London, to recognize the following constituents in the public gallery: Dan Ainsworth, a

policeman in St. Thomas, and his children, John, Luke and Owen Ainsworth. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: It is my great pleasure to introduce Miss Angelica Garcia-Hennings, who is a co-op placement in my office from Cambrian College in the public relations classes. Welcome.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have great pleasure in introducing Debbie Osske, sitting in the west members' gallery, a fixture around Queen's Park for many years, my former executive assistant and now doing great work for CANFAR, the AIDS research foundation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from Mississauga—Streetsville. I hope he's not going to steal my thunder.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, no, Speaker. I wouldn't dare do that, but I'm just very pleased to welcome back, and indeed welcome home, the former member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're stealing my thunder.

Mr. Bob Delaney: —Jean-Marc Lalonde.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. I'll deal with the member from Mississauga—Streetsville later.

The member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Today our page captain is Annie Lloyd from my beautiful riding of Simcoe North, and we're joined by her parents here today. Jodi, her mom, is a trustee with the Simcoe County District School Board.

M. Grant Crack: Il me fait un grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à l'ancien député provincial de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, M. Jean-Marc Lalonde, et son ami Rhéal Filion. Bienvenue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's another one that's stealing my thunder.

The member from York—Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to welcome back Louis Vattt to Queen's Park. He was a page here last year. Welcome back, Louis.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I may be about to steal your thunder one more time by introducing my very good friend and the great mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, former MPP for Ottawa West—Nepean. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have visitors from Nickel Belt. They're just on their way here, but I'll introduce them as they're coming. It's Neil Haskett with his wife, Tabatha and their four children, Clairice, Natalya, Aedan and William. They're here to support my colleague with the Ombudsman Amendment Act for children's aid.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): For the sake of brevity and redundancy, I would like, as the Speaker is known to do, to introduce all the former members that have visited us here so that we can get a third standing ovation for Jean-Marc Lalonde, Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliament; and the 39th Parliament, Mr. Jim Watson, MPP for Ottawa—Nepean.

Is there anyone else we can do a standing ovation for? Just let me know.

Interjection: The Legiskaters.

MEMBERS' HOCKEY GAME

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to point out that a really good event took place last night. The Legiskaters, for which we had representation from all sides, including the press, saw a crushing defeat to the ODA—well, I've got to be nice to the dentists. There were no teeth lost last night. The final score was 7-2. So we congratulate the Legiskaters for playing hockey for us last night.

We are on the verge of offering ourselves up as sacrificial lambs to the Quebec team. We'll see what happens with that one. Anyways, thank you.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Over the past two weeks, I've asked eight questions in this House. I've written you a letter asking you to simply verify the cost of the OSSTF deal. I've yet to receive any details other than you do acknowledge you've moved money around and that you say that there are no new costs. So can you precisely give me today how much of the so-called savings will be used to pay for the OSSTF deal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to report that we were able to reach an agreement with OSSTF. It has been ratified by 96% of their local presidents. It's currently in the process of being ratified or at least voted on by individual members, and we very much respect that process of working confidentially with our members, or at least our union members.

We're now in discussions with the elementary teachers' federation and are hoping that we will have similar results in terms of being able to conclude an agreement with them. But what I can assure you is that there has been no additional money put on the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think I was pretty clear in English, so I'll say it in French: combien?

We've asked precisely for the details on how much of their so-called savings will go toward this OSSTF deal, not to mention where it goes across the province, so I'll ask you one more time, and I'll be even a little bit more specific. How much of the savings that you're talking about are going to go to the extended mat leave?

Hon. Liz Sandals: What we—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Are you against mat leave?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Apparently.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Apparently, they're against mat leave.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Apparently, they're against mat leave and also sorting out sick leave details.

But what I can report to you is that the savings that were reported in January were \$1.8 billion. That is made up of about a quarter of a billion dollars in the fiscal year that just ended a few weeks ago. It's made up of over half a billion dollars in savings for the fiscal year that we are just beginning on April 1. It includes \$1.1 billion in long-term liability savings related to ending retirement gratuities and also the sick leave banking. That adds up to a total of \$1.8 billion.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They have a chronic problem with truth-telling on the other side, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Speaker.

We're going into a budget in, hopefully, less than a month. They've broken that promise of course to have it done by April 1. But they refuse to tell the chamber and the public how much of their so-called savings are going to go to the OSSTF deal and how much of those projected savings, or so-called cost-saving measures, are going to go toward one of the components in terms of mat leave. You can't continue to stand in this House with any credibility when all you want to get out of a deal with the OSSTF are some brand new friends.

The public is asking where this money is coming from. If you have \$1.8 billion in savings, then why didn't it did go toward servicing the debt and the deficit? If you have \$1.8 billion in savings, why doesn't it go to students in the classroom? I don't believe for one minute you have \$1.8 billion in savings, and I want to know how much this deal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Liz Sandals: All I can say is, we had \$1.8 billion in savings in January, and we've got \$1.8 billion in savings in April. What part of that is unclear? What I can also tell you is that \$1.1 billion of those savings went to pay down the deficit, which I think is what she's asking for.

But do you know what else we have? We have peace and stability returning to our classrooms. We have extra-curricular activities returning to our schools. I understand it is snowing out there today, but were it not for the snow, we have soccer practices returning. We have all sorts of great activities taking place in our schools that we did not have a couple of months ago, and that's the difference, the students—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. As your ministry continues to stall on providing an up-to-date detailed budget on the Pan Am Games, let's review what we know to date, Minister.

The organizing committee has grown tenfold, and 23% of them have made the sunshine list, costing Ontarians more than \$30 million in salaries by 2015, not including the bonuses for staying on until the end of the games. Then, you duplicated the bureaucracy by establishing a redundant, cloak-and-dagger Pan Am secretariat, another team of 62 bureaucrats feeding at the trough.

Minister, if you have a team of 140 people already organizing the games, what justification can you possibly have for adding a redundant bureaucracy of 62 more bureaucrats?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question from the honourable member. Our government is committed to supporting the Pan/Parapan American Games, and we are proud that, come 2015, Ontarians will have an opportunity to experience the games.

The salary structure of employees is determined by Toronto 2015. The compensation structure used by TO2015 has been in line with comparable multi-sport games across the world, including the Vancouver Olympics, the Pan Am Games, the Commonwealth Games or Winter games or Summer games of the Olympics. Other jurisdictions have not taken action to make their publicly paid positions open, but unlike other provinces or nations, our government is ensuring that these games will be the most transparent games hosted to date.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Clearly, this is a minister on the run. You went to great lengths to hide the Pan Am secretariat from the public, demonstrating that even he can't justify the bureaucratic duplication.

In 2011, I asked about the organization of all Pan Am bureaucracies through the order paper. I was directed to various memorandums of understanding, which apparently may or may not exist, depending on the day. Then, in 2012, I FOIed your memorandum of understanding, but the cumulative cost of the memorandum of understanding was \$3,000—not so free, Minister.

Recently, the sunshine list revealed the secretariat staff embedded across no less than three different ministries, rendering them unsearchable without knowing their names, but today the secret secretariat isn't a secret anymore.

Minister, you have serious issues with waste and transparency. Why were you hiding the secretariat, and is it too much to ask to get the real Pan Am salaries?

Hon. Michael Chan: I'm disappointed. I'm truly disappointed by the negative tone of the honourable member.

It's not good to talk down the Parapan and Pan American Games. It's not good to talk down the people of Ontario. It's not good to talk down the people of Canada. It's not good to talk down the athletes of the US. It's not good to talk down the people from Brazil. It's not good to talk down the people from Grenada. It's not good to talk down the people from Panama. Speaker, it's not good to talk down the people from Mexico.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Minister, let me make one thing clear: I don't think anybody in this House sits here and talks down to anybody except for you guys, talking down to the people of Ontario, not giving them the right numbers on the Pan Am budget.

Thirty per cent of the secretariat made the sunshine list, costing an additional \$2.8 million in duplication of management salaries. But it isn't clear if the salaries are coming out of the Pan Am budget or if they're coming from another Pan Am add-on like the billion-dollar air-rail link or the billion-dollar athletes' village.

Pan Am isn't going to cost us \$1.4 billion, is it, Minister? It's on track to being the next multi-billion-dollar boondoggle after Ornge, eHealth and the gas plants. We need more integrity from this government for the hard-working families of Ontario who are financing the games and deserve the truth about its costs.

Minister, are the secret secretariat salaries included in the Pan Am budget, or are they just going to cost—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. Be seated.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, please allow me to share a few—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Chan: —the people who talk up the people of Pan Am—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no, no. Let's not do that. And I will jump on that. Once we get quiet, stay that way.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, the people who talk up the Pan and Parapan games—

Interjection.

Hon. Michael Chan: —let me share a few with you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, second time for the member.

Hon. Michael Chan: James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages: "We are certain that the 2015 games will indeed be a success for Torontonians and all Canadians."

How about this one? Joe Oliver, Minister of Natural Resources: "Our government is making a significant investment in the 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games, with facilities that will benefit Canadians—"

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

While that will be considered the finish of your answer, the member has to talk to his caucus members who are talking while you're trying to answer.

I'm asking the Minister of the Environment and the Attorney General to come to order. I did speak to the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, but he was too engaged and he didn't even hear me: second time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North just did not help that situation at all. New question.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Over the last few days, my office has been speaking with patients and their loved ones who still have unanswered questions about the chemotherapy treatment.

Can the Premier assure people in London and across Ontario that hospitals have quality assurance measures in place to test drugs and assure that they are receiving the correct treatment?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for this question. What I can tell you, Speaker, is that many steps have been taken over the past few days to assure the people of this province that they are receiving the highest quality care.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Lambton-Kent, come to order. To make sure you heard it, again, member for Lambton-Kent, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On the specific issue that the member opposite has raised, Cancer Care Ontario took the step of reaching out to all 77 hospitals in this province that deliver chemotherapy to ask those hospitals to check to ensure that this overflow issue was limited to the cases that had been identified. Of the 77 hospitals in this province that do perform chemotherapy, 69 of them have responded, and there are no other issues that have been raised.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
1050

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, this week I spoke with Kristine Allison, a woman who lost her fiancé to cancer last year.

She wants some answers about the treatment Steve received. When she asked London Health Sciences, they told her they do not test chemotherapy drugs they receive from private suppliers. We followed up with the hospital and they won't say whether the policy has changed.

Premier, do you know whether the hospitals now have measures in place to assure that patients like Kristine's fiancé are receiving the treatment they are supposed to?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite speaks of one of the almost 1,000 patients in this province who have received very unsettling news. Those patients are all meeting with their oncologists to determine what impact this might have had and what change to their course of care, if any, ought to be implemented. It's very important that everyone who has been affected does have that meeting with their oncologist. We know that those meetings are happening, that group meetings are happening and that people are getting the information they need at the individual level, but this does raise questions about the system. That's why we have pulled

together all of the partners in our cancer care delivery system, importantly including Health Canada, to ensure that we can learn any lessons that need to be learned and assure patients—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, when I spoke to Kristine—she is heartbroken. Listening to her—the fact that she's not receiving answers is really distressing. People don't have a lot of trust in this health care system right now.

I want to ask the Premier again: Our public health care system is our most valuable resource. No one should have to live with the question that Kristine is wrestling with. People have a right to assume that they are receiving the best possible treatment. The hospital assumes that the government is providing oversight; the government isn't providing that oversight at all.

Patients in London and across Ontario want to know: Can the Premier tell us that quality assurance measures are now in place to protect our patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite that all of the people and the bodies responsible for oversight are working very hard to get answers to those questions. Health Canada has acknowledged its role and is now engaged in being part of the solution. The College of Pharmacists acknowledges the gap and has offered to fill that gap as we move forward to ensure that all of our patients are getting appropriate care.

Dr. Jake Thiessen, an eminent pharmacist, has agreed to take on the responsibility of looking at broader system issues. We must always learn. If there are lessons to be learned, we must learn those lessons and we must fix those problems.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Yesterday, her Minister of Health was unable to answer who should be responsible for oversight of the prepackaged drugs that were brought into our hospitals. We now know that this process of outsourcing of drug preparation has been happening for five years. It would seem that five years is a long time and that no one has been in charge of quality control or regulation.

I would like to know, will the Premier come clean and admit to Ontarians that five years is a long time for her Ministry of Health to fail in their fundamental responsibility of oversight? Five years is a long time to be asleep at the wheel.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health will want to answer on the supplementary, but I want to just be clear that a gap has been identified. It is unacceptable to me, it is unacceptable to our government and it is unacceptable to everyone in this Legislature that such a gap should exist, that this should have happened and that people should have been put at risk. It should never have happened. We acknowledge that.

That is why we've taken action immediately, as soon as we realized, as soon as we found out, as soon as the Ministry of Health knew that there was a gap. We've put in place the experts. We've put in place an interim solution which is that the College of Pharmacists have agreed to play this role. But it shouldn't have happened. We acknowledge that and we need to learn and rectify the situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: What we are seeing in Ontario is a terrifying pattern. In order to save money, a hospital decides to outsource a vital program, a vital service, to the private sector. But it never occurs to this government that checks and balances should be in place to ensure that quality is maintained.

Ontarians are still grappling with corporate excesses at Ornge, at eHealth, and it seems to be becoming a familiar story: A for-profit private company profits while quality of care to the people of Ontario suffers.

Why should patients and why should Ontarians believe that this government will finally do their job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member opposite knows, we have appointed Dr. Jake Thiessen to really review what happened in this situation so that we cannot only address the issues raised in this particular situation but that we look at the whole supply chain of our cancer drugs to ensure that all of the right checks and balances are in place. I think it is important that in our health care system—and the member opposite is part of our health care system; she understands this. Every health care system is continually working to improve quality. When an issue arises, it is incumbent upon all of us to identify the problem, fix the problem, look and make sure that there is nothing else in the system that must be fixed. That work is now well under way. And so we will continue that work. It is an important responsibility and one I take very seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, the review that the minister talks about is only looking at what has already gone wrong. But the more we learn, the more questions we have. If it happens to chemotherapy drugs, what assurance do Ontario patients have that it has not already happened to other pre-packaged, outsourced drugs in other fields of medicine?

Speaker, Ontarians have lost faith in their government's basic ability to provide oversight, to oversee our health care system so it is safe for us to trust. They want the assurance that only an independent third party can give them. They want the assurance that if they complain to the Ombudsman, this government will grant the Ombudsman oversight of our hospital system.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to make it very, very clear that we demand the highest quality regardless of who is supplying that product. I don't care whether something is done in one setting; or whether it's being

done in a hospital setting, we demand the highest quality of care. Quality will never be sacrificed. It is essential that quality is maintained or even enhanced regardless of the setting.

I also want to make it very clear that Dr. Thiessen is looking forward. He does need to understand what happened here, but then he must look forward to make sure that any lessons that can be learned are in fact learned and those recommendations are implemented.

This happens in our health care system all the time and it should happen all the time. What's important is that when there is a problem, we acknowledge it. Nobody's hiding behind this, Speaker. We're going to understand what happened—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning for the Premier. We want to recap what we've learned so far about your gas plant scandal. We've had senior Liberal insiders—these are men and women, some who are pulling down as much as \$367,000 a year—come and testify. We've heard from them and we've heard from experts who put the cost at close to \$1 billion doing it the way the Liberal government wanted it. Yet no two people have been able to come up with the same number. That in itself implies there are more documents you haven't produced which contain these answers.

1100

Will you settle this, Premier? Will you tell us what you knew about Project Vapour, Project Vapour-lock, and will you tell us how much your gas plant scandal is costing Ontarians and who ordered the documents to be withheld?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I understand there are two parts to his question. One has to do with the question of cost. I'd like to remind the honourable member that we have asked the Auditor General to look into both the Oakville and Mississauga plants. His first report, as members are aware, will be coming out early next week, and my understanding is that the committee will have an opportunity to examine the report and, should they wish, call forward the Auditor General.

The second question, I believe, was who denied access to all the documents in the government on the gas plant? The answer to that, Mr. Speaker, is very simple: The honourable member did, with all his colleagues. When we put forward a motion in front of the committee to produce a government-wide search, much broader than had ever been asked for, he and all his colleagues—I saw it on television—raised their hands and voted against it.

At the end of the day, all parties in this Legislature opposed both these gas plants, and we followed through with that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: This answer is really like being at the committee, where we aren't getting answers, either.

Premier, on Monday, the Auditor General will report to this House on the cost of your Liberal seat-saver program in Mississauga. Now, we know the only reason your committee agreed to the auditor looking into Mississauga is because the bulk of the costs of this entire scandal are really buried in the Oakville plant. We'll get to those later, but I thought we'd give you one last chance, an eleventh-hour confession on Mississauga. What did you know about Project Vapour, Project Vapour-lock, and will you take the opportunity to stand up now and tell Ontarians what you knew to be the cost of the Mississauga cancellation and who ordered the documents to be withheld?

Hon. John Milloy: If I can be bold enough to speak on behalf of the Premier, I think one thing she did know is that the Conservative Party opposed both those plants.

Let me talk a little bit about the justice policy committee this week. We had Frank Clegg, chairman of Citizens for Clean Air, a group that was involved in opposing the gas plant. This is what he had to say on April 9: "We met with all the parties and all the candidates and were given commitments by every candidate in the Oakville area that they would support cancelling the plant.... Well, I know certainly Ted Chudleigh, who was the candidate MPP from north of Oakville, was very active in his support of cancelling the plant. During the plant battle—I'll use that word—PCs did not have a confirmed nominee but we met with two or three potential candidates, and each of them had said that they would support that."

Mr. Speaker, as I said, a promise they made; a promise we kept.

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. The flip-flopping on revenue-sharing for Toronto on a casino deal continues every day. Today, the Premier is quoted in the Toronto Star as stating, "Casino revenue could stretch to tens of millions of dollars—maybe hundreds of millions."

Will the Premier let the people of Toronto know what the revenue-sharing agreement will be, or does she have to change it every day?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The context of that question was that the reporter was asking me whether a casino could generate enough revenue to pay for the transit that's needed. What I said was that my understanding was that the most that casino revenue could generate for the GTHA or for Toronto would be in the hundreds of millions.

I don't know what that number is, Mr. Speaker, but my point was—and I would love to hear from the member opposite on this—that we don't have the revenue stream we need to build transit in the GTHA. We need a dedicated revenue stream. Casino revenue is not going to be adequate to that.

I hope the member opposite is going to support us as we look for that revenue stream and deal with the tools that Metrolinx is going to bring forward, because his constituents need transit built in the GTHA as much as the rest of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The flip-flopping continues even in this Legislature.

Premier, other cities with casinos are only getting about 5% of revenues. That doesn't even come close to the tens of millions or hundreds of millions of dollars that Toronto, and now the Premier, is indicating might be available.

Will the Premier finally come clean with Ontarians on revenue-sharing formulas for the casinos? Tell them what it is now. Tell them what it is today, so that Toronto and other municipalities can decide.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I don't know what the revenue is going to be, because I don't know where the casinos are going to be, I don't know what the deals are going to be. And the formula—as the member opposite knows, I've said to the OLG that the formula has to be the same across the province, that there will be no special deals.

I don't know what the numbers are going to be, but in reference to the quote, what I do know is that there is no casino that is going to generate enough revenue to build the transit that's needed in the GTHA to keep people and goods moving. That's the point I was making. I really hope that the NDP is going to join with us in our advancement of the need to build transit in the GTHA. That's a cause that I hope they will be able to get behind.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question today for the Minister of Research and Innovation. The government committed to continuing to build an innovation-driven economy. It creates jobs, it's going to support strong economic growth, it finds important research-based solutions and it's going to create some new products. Our success in the global economy depends not only on that, but on our ability to build on strengths and to innovate. Information and communication technology is a key area that drives innovation; it generates a large and steadily increasing share of our employment, international trade and gross domestic product.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation, what is this government specifically doing to support the information and communication technology in Ontario?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Thank you, member from Oakville, for that question. Technology is changing how we do business, how we share information and how we communicate. Our government recognizes that supporting the information and communication technology sector fuels changes across all sectors. To date, my ministry has invested about \$400 million in communication and information technology and digital media.

Ontario has so much to offer. Ontario is home, for example, to cutting-edge research institutions, a highly skilled and educated workforce and a favourable corporate tax environment. All of this helps us to attract technology initiatives to Ontario, such as the IBM Research and Development Centre. Ontario will remain on the cutting edge of research and development in the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks to the minister for his first answer. Research and development are critical to innovation. They help this province remain competitive in a global economy. IBM, specifically, is a leading company that's doing very innovative work in this province. A number of my constituents in Oakville and around the GTA are employed by this world-class company.

While it's great to hear that our government is making investments that are helping to attract global companies that do important research and development, like IBM, Speaker, through you back to the Minister of Research and Innovation: Would he let us know specifically more about the IBM Research and Development Centre and the specific projects that they are working on today.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I thank, again, the member from Oakville for this question. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the IBM Research and Development Centre here in Toronto. With our government's investment of \$15 million and our federal government's investment of \$20 million, along with the \$175-million investment from IBM Canada itself—with \$210 million of investments, IBM Canada, with the assistance of several leading universities in Ontario, have created a world-class research centre which is called the Research and Development Centre.

This centre, using state-of-the-art computer infrastructure, is focusing on research solutions to health care, water management and energy management. In addition to that, they have created 200 new highly paid and highly skilled jobs here in Ontario.

1110

ARBITRATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Premier. This afternoon, the House will debate the Public Sector Capacity to Pay Act, 2013. This comprehensive plan to fix Ontario's broken arbitration system was introduced by our House leader, Jim Wilson, after extensive consultation. His hard work has earned endorsements from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, the eastern Ontario mayors and many, many other municipal leaders. I'd like to welcome again the mayor of Ottawa here today.

Premier, we've done the work for you. We've had those respectful conversations that you keep talking about. What's finally missing to give municipalities and public sector employers what they want is your support. Premier, will you stand up for comprehensive arbitration reform and vote for our bill today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I certainly wish that last year, when we had provisions in our budget bill, that this conciliatory tone had been coming from the other side. We thought the changes that we had put in the budget bill, the changes that we made to the interest-based arbitration system—we were sure that the Progressive Conservatives would be supporting those changes, because we knew that they wanted to make sure that there was a fair, transparent system. We put changes in place, and to our surprise, they voted against those changes. I have no idea why—

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're talking about today, but I'm talking about the opportunity that we had a year ago.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The new government. The new government. New.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Renfrew has deserved my attention.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Aw, he deserves everyone's attention.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Nepean—Carleton now deserves my attention.

I just want to make a point about the debate. When it goes between people, it becomes a problem. So the idea and the tradition of this place is to direct your question and direct your answer to the Speaker—as a reminder.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It would have been terrific if the Conservatives last year had responded to the changes that we put in the budget bill, the changes to interest-based arbitration. I really wish that they had supported us at that time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Premier, I can't believe your response. We're a few hours away from voting to solve a problem municipalities have been demanding for years, and she's giving me year-old talking points from Dalton McGuinty.

Premier, since you're so stuck in the past, I'm going to give you a couple of quotes from what people are saying in the present about this bill.

The Windsor Star editorial yesterday closed with: "The Ability to Pay Act is sensible. It must be passed."

On the same day, the Ottawa Sun editorial read: "This bill should be supported by all parties. Stop" the madness.

Again, I'm going to ask you—you're a former Minister of Municipal Affairs—will you keep your commitment to municipalities and vote for this bill this afternoon?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the supplementary as well. Our government agrees that reforms are needed, and we are committed to developing an arbitration system that works, is fair for all parties and is constitutional.

Facts are always important in a debate like this. The fact is that this government is a strong supporter of municipalities. In fact, it's our government which has been uploading billions of dollars from municipalities, which the party opposite downloaded. In fact, it was the mayor of Ottawa, then-Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who inked that very important agreement on behalf of this government, and we thank him for that.

That uploading is helping ensure that services that families rely on, like fire and police, are available for them. My advice to the party opposite: Read the budget before deciding whether you're going to vote against it or not.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. Yesterday in this House, the Minister of Economic Development claimed that the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund is an important part of the government's plan to create jobs. It's been almost a year now since the fund has been created. The legislation establishing the fund requires a board of directors before this fund gets up and running, but no board has yet been established.

Why is this government turning its back on a region with a desperate need for new, good-paying jobs by dragging its feet on getting the fund up and running?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know the member opposite, as she referred to the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, appreciates the tremendous potential and impact that fund is going to have. It was proclaimed, I think, in October of last year.

We have begun to fund important projects in southwestern Ontario. I have no doubt, in fact, that we're going to see the same success that we saw in eastern Ontario over the past years, where I think we have created literally thousands of jobs through that program, leveraging on average about 10 to 1 the investment from the private sector through the funds we get from the government.

I look forward to the supplementary to speak to this more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The potential of the fund will not be realized if you don't have a board to actually get the fund up and running.

The Ontario NDP believes we need to foster job creation in southwestern Ontario, help that was promised by this government a year ago. Jobs are being lost as I stand here today. Just last week, we learned about another 350 families who will be out of work, this time in Fergus at the A.O. Smith plant. In Windsor, the unemployment rate stands at an unacceptable 9%, and in the London area, 5,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs were lost in this past year alone.

Why is this government stalling on establishing a board of directors for the southwestern development fund and depriving this hard-hit region of good-paying jobs?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you for that supplementary. Of course, our priority is to make sure the funds begin to flow. Unfortunately, there was a significant delay last year, because of the official opposition's delay of the program, in actually rolling out these programs. So we're going ahead. We're working towards forming that board. It's an important aspect of the program and making sure that the funds respond in an appropriate fashion. I want to say that I think the member would agree, particularly given the circumstances and the stresses that are being faced by many of our businesses and employees around the province, in southwestern Ontario, the priority needs to be to make sure that those funds flow.

We had some delays because it took a long time actually for this Legislature, because of the opposition, to pass the funds in the first place. We're working. We're taking the steps in a responsible way to make sure that board is up and running while we continue to flow the funds.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. One of the frequent complaints I hear from my constituents on consumer issues is the whole problem of door-to-door sales. In my own riding, I've had to get involved with residents on everything from the aggressive nature of some salespeople to misleading information. I am personally frustrated and saddened when I hear about how seniors and newcomers fall prey to misleading, aggressive, high-pressure sales tactics employed by certain door-to-door salespeople.

Of all the door-to-door sales, the most complaints I hear of are those to do with water heater rentals. Minister, what action will you be taking to address these concerns raised about door-to-door sales, not just by my constituents but by all Ontarians?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: If I may, I'd like to wish the honourable member from Scarborough-Rouge River a very happy belated birthday. I understand it was his birthday yesterday.

It's true that door-to-door sales are near the top of the list of complaints my ministry receives. I'm sure members have heard this issue from their own constituents—members from all parts of the House. In fact, an Angus Reid survey found that 57% of homeowners felt pressured into making a purchase, signing a contract, when approached at their door, with 35% of them regretting that decision.

The member is correct to say that of all door-to-door sales, water heater rentals are the most complained about by consumers: 3,200 complaints and inquiries in my ministry last year. That's a 30% increase over the last year. In fact, water heater contracts continue to rank number two in the complaints.

That's why I was happy to announce earlier today that the new Ontario government is looking to introduce legislation to increase consumer protection against aggressive door-to-door sales practices.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I'm happy to hear of the action the government will be taking in response to the rising demand for action on door-to-door sales. I'm especially pleased to hear that water heater rental contracts will be the specific focus of this particular legislation.

Many of these contracts present consumers with complicated, onerous and hard-to-understand terms. Many consumers, especially newcomers and seniors, are vulnerable and are taken advantage of by these salespeople. Installing water heaters also represents a large risk to consumers because of the high cost involved in undoing the work if they change their minds after signing the contract, making the current 10-day cooling off period ineffective.

Minister, can you please explain how this new legislation will address these concerns?

1120

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: The member is absolutely correct in pointing out that consumers do indeed face high risks in undoing the work if they sign contracts. Consumers currently only have 10 days to change their minds after signing such a contract, and sometimes a company installs a new appliance in that period. That's why any potential legislation here, when introduced, would allow up to 20 days to cancel the agreement after entering into a door-to-door water heater rental contract. We're doubling the cooling-off period to 20 days, providing extra time for consumers. We also want to protect and support vulnerable consumers.

We'll also require plain language in any contracts and we'll require the companies to confirm sales by making scripted and recorded telephone calls to the customer after the contract is signed. There are other provisions that require the supplier to pay cancellation fees if the rules are not observed.

Speaker, this is about protecting consumers in Ontario. It's not about going after reputable firms, but we are going to take an aggressive stance on these aggressive businesses and unfair practices in the marketplace.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question today is for the Premier. Don Drummond, the Auditor General, the Grey-Bruce medical officer of health and even you have said the green act has been implemented wrong. Now today the Fraser Institute has released a scathing report which says you and your government are way off track with green energy.

The Minister of Labour just said that facts are important. Premier, the report said that Ontario now has the highest energy rate in North America, with increases of 40% to 50% forecasted. Your green energy scheme is a job killer.

Premier, the green energy facts are stacking up against you, so next week will you support my Bill 39 ensuring

affordable energy, which will put an end to the unaffordable—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I had a very interesting meeting, Mr. Speaker, a few days ago with folks from the health care community, particularly those who work with children and people with respiratory conditions. I think it would be a really good conversation for the member opposite to have with the asthma society, with the lung association, because clean air is such an important part of what people expect. As someone said to me in that meeting, you can choose what you eat, you can choose the water that you drink, to a certain extent; you can't choose the air that you breathe. We all have to breathe the air.

The Green Energy Act has allowed us to clean up the air we breathe. It has helped us give a generation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon, come to order and take your seat, too.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —the opportunity to breathe cleaner air because we're shutting down the coal-fired plants, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the Fraser Institute report talked about putting scrubbers on coal plants. That doesn't deal with the CO₂ emissions, and so—

Interjection: Shameful.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find it shameful that the person that asked the question wasn't listening to the answer.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need response or rebuttal. It's my gentle way of trying to say stop.

Supplementary? The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the Premier: Families and businesses will not accept your status quo. The Fraser Institute report today said that the manufacturing sector has been the hardest hit by your green energy scheme as employment has fallen 50% but costs went up 29%. The report also said that at the rate your government is going, Ontario will have 10 times the amount of wind turbines we already have installed. Premier, I can assure you that the residents of Chatham-Kent-Essex do not want 10 times more wind turbines, and neither do the people of Huron-Bruce, Dufferin-Caledon, Simcoe-Grey, Haldimand-Norfolk, Nepean-Carleton, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and many others.

Premier, when will your government face the music, face the people of rural Ontario and admit that your green energy fiasco is all wrong?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've met many people in rural Ontario who are concerned about the issue that the member opposite raises in terms of wind energy. I've been very clear that we need a much better process in

terms of community engagement on the placement of these pieces of infrastructure.

But, Mr. Speaker, the benefits of closing down the coal-fired plants, the benefits to the air, the benefits to cleaning up the pollution in our atmosphere, are just immeasurable. I don't know if the Fraser Institute report talks about the \$4.4 billion in avoided health and environmental costs, but again, I say to the member opposite, I really believe it would be instructive if he had a conversation with some of the people who deal with people who have respiratory conditions, parents of children with asthma, and ask them if they think that it's worth the cost to shut down those plants and make sure our air is clean.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Jonah Schein: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. This week, the Minister of Energy finally acknowledged that the Enbridge proposal to pump tar sands across the GTHA is a "significant" and "serious issue" and that it raises "environmental concerns." He said the government will intervene at the National Energy Board hearings on Line 9, but the National Energy Board has created unnecessary barriers that will restrict public participation.

Will the minister therefore agree to launch a provincial environmental assessment of the Line 9 reversal to ensure full public participation and the protection of Ontario's drinking water and watersheds?

Hon. James J. Bradley: We understand the National Energy Board approved the Enbridge 9A reversal to transport crude oil from western Canada to eastern Ontario. We have received some requests that the province intervene. We are giving very serious consideration to those requests. As you know, municipalities, the province, virtually anybody has an opportunity to make an intervention. It is federally regulated in this particular case and as such it's subjected to the jurisdiction of the National Energy Board.

The Ministry of the Environment worked with the Ministry of Energy to ensure that any potential environmental impacts arising from reversal of Line 9 are considered by the National Energy Board in its decision on the Enbridge application.

Our submission, I should say to the member, also stressed the importance of aboriginal and public consultations. So we will continue to monitor the process and the health, safety and environmental impacts of this proposal and consider those requests which have been made for what the member made reference to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the minister, a study by Toronto-area conservation authorities concluded that a spill from Line 9, like the one in Kalamazoo, Michigan, would constitute a "significant threat" to drinking water in the GTA. Under new federal rules, the project will not receive a federal environmental assessment, but Quebec has committed to conducting a provincial assessment to protect Quebecers.

Why will the Ontario Minister not stand up for the safety in drinking water of people in our province? Why won't he launch a provincial environmental assessment that allows full public participation and full consideration of the environmental impacts of Line 9?

Hon. James J. Bradley: As I indicated to the member in my initial answer to him, we have received requests from different organizations that we undertake—even though it's under federal jurisdiction—a provincial environmental assessment. I have indicated very clearly that we are assessing all of the information that has been provided to us, the various requests which have come to us. We have encouraged municipalities, various ministries of our government, and the public and interest groups out there to make the representations to the National Energy Board and to the federal government. So we are giving full and comprehensive consideration to the requests which have been made, and we'll be forthcoming with a fulsome answer at a point in time in the future.

1130

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. This government's commitment to infrastructure is unprecedented. Let me give you an example. Last year, this government spent \$13 billion in Ontario alone. Compare that with the Conservative Harper government that spent a measly, paltry \$3 billion across Canada. That just shows you the difference. The reason for that is because the Conservatives don't understand the difference between spending and investment, and we do understand the difference between spending and investment.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: Recently, Metrolinx came out with a suggestion—just one recommendation of many—of some revenue tools as to how we can go on expanding public transit in the GTHA, and I'd like to hear his comments on it.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member for Mississauga East–Cooksville is quite correct. We're having a very vigorous discussion.

I want to thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville and the member for York South–Weston. These are two Liberal members who have asked me questions almost every week about how we're progressing and holding this government to account. I want to thank them.

I have not one, not two, not three, not four, not five, not six, but seven critics in the opposition, and I can't get one question from the members opposite. The leader should be docking the critics' pay, Mr. Speaker—seven critics. We're having the most important conversation on transit expansion, green electrification, and the adult conversations going on outside—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that great answer.

I also want to talk about something very interesting that's been happening in my riding recently. There's a new sight in Mississauga, and that's the sight of double-decker GO buses. Minister, I'd just like to get a sense from you a little bit about what these new double-decker buses mean for the good people of Mississauga.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is early and quick action on the Premier's commitment to make transit investments a priority across Ontario, particularly in the GTHA and Ottawa.

These double-decker buses carry 81 people. They're very green. They use one driver to carry more people, and while our old double-decker buses, because of their height, could only go on 11 different routes, these can go fully on 45 different routes and connect that. This means—for people, particularly in Hamilton and across the 905—more regular service, more efficient service and better value for tax dollars because they cost a lot less per kilometre to run.

One day, one of those critics is going to ask me a question, Mr. Speaker. I just know it. I can feel it. I'm just on the edge of my seat with anticipation.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: For a half-year, we've been saying that documents have been withheld. You see, Project Vapour has been bugging us, Speaker. It's been referred to in many, many, many emails, but somebody had asked for that document to be withheld. Today, in the fourth document dump we received—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Directed to?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Today, in the fourth document dump that we received, we now know why this document was withheld. Premier, do you recall signing the agenda for cabinet when Project Vapour was discussed? This is your signature. You authorized this Project Vapour. Was it you who ordered this document withheld, Premier? Is that why we didn't have this until this very morning?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now that I've got your attention: To the person who decides that once I get the quiet they want to use their moment in the sun, I will warn you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The document that the member opposite has held up was not before committee because it wasn't within the scope of the questions, which is why we had suggested that the scope be expanded. We had suggested—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I will withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We had suggested that all documents be available, because we suggested that the scope of the committee be expanded. That was rejected by the members opposite, so that didn't happen. But remember, I have said that I am going to come before the committee if I am called, Mr. Speaker. I am perfectly willing to do that.

The other thing that's true is that that document he is speaking of was a document that referred to the Oakville closure. The decision had been made by the government a year before, and we were implementing the closure of that plant.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, we have a document linking the Premier to this scandal. Her signature is on it right here. She attended a meeting with the trifecta of Duguid, Bentley and Duncan. You are implicated in the scandal. You cannot wash your hands anymore of this mess.

So the question is very simple: We had this document already, but the draft agenda wasn't included. The reason why this draft agenda wasn't included is because your name is on it. So who ordered the withdrawal of that document?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We suggested that the scope of the committee be expanded so that all of those questions could be asked and all of those documents could be brought forward. The members opposite said they didn't want that to happen. I have said I will come before committee.

I was part of a government that made a decision to close a gas plant that everyone in this House agreed should be closed, should not be built in the place that it was being built; we all agreed on that. The decision was made a year earlier; I was part of the government that was implementing that decision. I have never said that I wasn't; I said I was part of the government that made that decision, and I was part of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I said that I was not in the room when the decision around the closure of the Mississauga plant was made, but I'm part of the government, and I stand by those decisions. We all agreed in this House that those decisions should be made, and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: Premier, this cabinet agenda document that you have

signed shows the government authorizing proceeding with arbitration agreements—an arbitration process with TransCanada. When you signed that, were you told the scale of risk that the government was taking on, and were you told that the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, had previously said that a long-term process would dramatically reduce the risk to the government? Did you know what risk you were signing for at that point?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I knew that we had made a decision to not go ahead, to relocate the gas plant. That was a decision that everyone in this House agreed with, because nobody believed that the siting was the right siting. So we listened to the residents of Oakville and we listened to the residents of Mississauga to relocate the gas plants. All parties supported this decision.

Since I have been in this role, what I have said is that we need to provide all of the documentation that is asked for, we need to have an open process; and we tried to open the process even more than it already was, and the members opposite decided they didn't want that process opened, they didn't want the scope broadened, they didn't want that full range of questions to be asked. I believe that it would have been a good idea to have that process. It would have been a good idea to broaden that scope. That's not what happened.

I will continue to work with my colleagues to make sure that every question that is asked is answered.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm deciding whether you're up or I'm up. The member on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have a member's statement this afternoon, and I would ask unanimous consent to allow me to wear the Canadian Cancer Society daffodil during that statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member has asked for unanimous consent to wear the daffodil during his statement. Are we agreed? Agreed.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've been advised that it would be wise if we were giving everyone permission to wear the button. An addendum to the unanimous consent, by members' agreement: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to remind this Legislature that the scope did include this July 29—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is not a point of order, and when I stand, you sit.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, I beg your indulgence. I wish to welcome to this Legislature Michele Riel, who

is the mother of a great page with us today, Louis Riel-Brockie from Mississauga South. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I don't think she's here yet. I'd like to welcome, from my riding of Burlington, Carolyn Scholey, a constituent who was here on September 27 and October 4 to show support for Bill 110, and who has returned today to lend her support to Bill 42. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It gives me great honour today to welcome members of the Canadian Sikh Association here to the Ontario Legislature. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Brampton-Gore-Bramalea.

Interjection: Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd also like to welcome the Canadian Sikh Association here today and thank them for honouring us, all members of Parliament, with presentations to each party. They're here in both the east and west galleries, and I'd like to welcome them all again today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member for messing up his riding, but I would never do that on purpose.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd also like to recognize the Sikh community here today, but I'd also like to recognize some constituents and citizens of Ontario who are here to listen to Bill 42, and they are: Darlene Sine, Nadia Fordham, Joanne Cormier, Kenneth Reid, Curtis Kingston and Samantha Paulin. Welcome to Queen's Park, and I hope we do justice to the cause you bring to the table.

Mme France Gélinas: Well, my very special guests from Nickel Belt have arrived, so I'd like to welcome the family of Neil and Tabatha Haskett, with their four children: that's Aedan, Clarice, William and Natalia who are here with us in the gallery.

They have brought some of their friends with them: Chris York, Kim Shook and Karen Bauer, as well as Pat Hudak—no relationship, I'm told—who are also here to support Bill 42, the Ombudsman Amendment Act for the children's aid societies. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I would also like to welcome the members who are here from the Canadian Sikh Association, and I look forward to making a presentation a little bit later on their celebration of Vaisakhi. Welcome, folks.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ALFREDO DeGASPERIS

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise today to pay tribute to a great Canadian, an exemplary citizen, a builder of commun-

ities, an inspirational entrepreneur and business leader, a generous philanthropist and a friend to those who had the privilege of knowing him.

Alfredo DeGasperis has left a legacy, not only in the form of award-winning residential neighbourhoods, office towers and business parks, but also through the full-scale cancer wards and heart clinics that stand as a testament to his generosity of spirit. Although his life concluded on March 27, at the age of 79, his influence will be felt for generations to come.

Fred immigrated from Sora, Italy, when he was 18 years old. He and his brothers, Antonio and Angelo DeGasperis, personified the classic immigrant story of the 1950s. A strong work ethic, determination and an entrepreneurial spirit would take Fred from operating Concrete and Drain Ltd. out of a basement in a North York bungalow to overseeing a company that today employs more than 2,000 people and commands a multi-million dollar market share across several different industries.

We extend our condolences to his wife, Teresa; his sons, Jim and Freddy Jr.; his daughter, Carla DeGasperis; and his grandchildren, who were his ultimate pride.

I know that all members of this Legislature will join me in acknowledging the great contribution that Alfredo DeGasperis has made to Ontario and to Canada.

LIBERTY VILLAGE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I rise today to congratulate the work that the Liberty Village BIA is doing in my community, and also to congratulate the Liberty Village Residents' Association for doing a whole lot of work to represent 8,000 people that live in that community just south of King and west of Strachan—8,000 people that live and work there, and 500 businesses that have established themselves in that community. We're talking about people who work in the music industry, people who work in the film industry, in software, architecture and design. That represents the new vitality of the culture that is coming, not just in my community but the whole of the riding.

We talked this morning, in the meeting that I had with the BIAs, about condominium issues and the OMB—which I have talked about here for a while—but we also talked about casinos. I say to you that the Liberty Village Residents' Association and the BIA have taken a very clear and strong position against the mega casino that would be right next door to where they are. They recognize that that mega casino would destroy the vitality of the Liberty Village that has just established itself in the last five years. They know that a mega casino would act like a vacuum cleaner and steal away much of the vitality that exists in Liberty Village and the surrounding community. I congratulate them for that work.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am proud to rise in the House today to recognize and congratulate three com-

munity leaders that do amazing work in my riding of York South-Weston. Lekan Olawoye, Victor Beausoleil and Shadya Yasin have been selected to serve as members of the first Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities. Lekan will also serve as council chair. These young individuals are doing tremendous work with and on behalf of our youth and have an exciting opportunity to shape government policy through their participation in this council.

I have been privileged to work with each of these three leaders, and I am happy to see these hard-working and inspiring youth advocates be recognized by the Ontario government. Another council member, Liban Abokor, has also contributed to our community of York South-Weston. It is great to have such strong representation on this council, and I know that these individuals are very well qualified for the task at hand.

This council will engage youth, young professionals and community members to learn about their challenges and share ideas on how to best support Ontario's youth, all across the province. I am excited to follow the progress of this council and to see what advice they come up with to improve the delivery and design of youth programs and services. Congratulations, and best of luck to all council members.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise in the House today to pay tribute to Clarington-area volunteers who have been recognized for their dedication to the preservation of built history.

My constituent Bill Paterson received a lifetime achievement award from the Ontario Heritage Trust. In the past, I sat with Bill on the local conservation advisory committee. Bill restored and preserved the stone house on Bloor Street where he and his family lived for approximately 30 years. It was subsequently moved as part of the 407 built in the east part of Durham region. More recently, he has restored a brick Regency cottage in Bowmanville, and as a member of the Masonic Lodge, he was active in achieving a historic designation for the Jerusalem lodge at 19 King Street East in Bowmanville.

Jennifer Knox of the Knox family farm was recognized for her work in the preservation of the farm's original barn, and also the relocation of the Anthony Washington stone house to their farm in 2005. This house was on the pathway also of the future 407 right-of-way.

1310

The Ontario Heritage Trust has also honoured a group of volunteers for their dedication to preserving and keeping the Enfield United Church in pristine condition and making the church available for community events. Although Enfield United Church has been closed for over 40 years, it is important to our history, our heritage and, indeed, our lives.

I'd also like to congratulate Angela Tibbles, chair of the Clarington Heritage Committee, and the volunteers of

the Newcastle Village and District Historical Society who were also recognized by Clarington council recently.

I tell all members of this House that built history is worth preserving. Thank you to those volunteers who work so hard to preserve it.

COMMERCIAL INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Today, I rise to discuss an issue of commercial insurance. I've raised the issue of personal automobile insurance time and time again, but on the horizon there's great trouble brewing in the area of commercial insurance. Due to increasing gas and insurance costs, taxi drivers are taking home maybe five to 10 cents for every dollar they earn. In fact, taxi drivers are facing policy renewals that are double, and in some cases triple, the premiums they paid last year.

I'll give you an example. In Hamilton recently, a taxi driver was quoted—and this is for a driver with absolutely no claims, no accidents on his record—\$16,000 per year, up from \$5,600 in 2012. That is unbelievable, for their rates to go up by more than triple in one year for absolutely no claims, no accidents.

A key factor to this rate hike is that there's a major insurance company that has withdrawn from the market, which has forced all of these drivers into the facilities market, which is a market for those who are bad drivers with convictions and criminal offences. They're being treated the same way for absolutely no reason. This is something that's happening under this Liberal government's watch. FSCO approves all changes to the insurance industry. They regulate the industry, and it's incumbent on this government to address this issue.

We've been fighting for auto insurance reform when it comes to personal automobile insurance, but now commercial drivers of all types, including taxi drivers, truck drivers and those of other commercial vehicles, are also feeling the brunt of this. We will hold the government accountable to ensure that commercial drivers are treated fairly in this province.

WOMEN PILOTS

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm thrilled to be able to rise in the House and share with you a story that happened this previous March. In March 2013, the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton, Ontario, unveiled a very unique display celebrating Canadian women pilots, in honour of the women who have led the way bravely, from ferrying aircraft during World War II to flying CF-18s, helicopters and Hercules aircraft, and also serving as air crew in Afghanistan. The Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum saluted those women who over the past century dared to reach for the stars as astronauts.

The display included the original flight suit of Eileen Vollick. She was the first female Snowbird pilot and also the first female commanding officer of the Snowbirds. But when she started to learn to fly, she first had to ask for permission to do so. It wasn't until she was 19 that

she realized her dream. Then she became the first licensed female pilot, and Canada's skies changed forever. Her determination and her accomplishments are an inspiration for young girls and women, and her flight suit is on display. There's now a terminal at the Wiarton Keppel airport named in her honour, and it is the only terminal in Canada to be named after a female.

We have a long way to go, but we have come a long way as well.

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a privilege to rise during April, Cancer Awareness Month, to help the Canadian Cancer Society celebrate its 75th anniversary. Across Canada and in communities in every corner of Ontario, they are leading the fight against cancer through their fundraising, advocacy, prevention and support activities.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Canadian Cancer Society volunteers, 62% of Canadians diagnosed with cancer today beat the disease. No greater testament to the importance of this work exists than the fact that the survival rate was just 25% in the 1940s, when the society began fundraising for research.

The sad reality of cancer is, we all know someone who lost their fight, but thanks in part to the Canadian Cancer Society's efforts, we probably know two or three survivors.

In my riding, the backbone of the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Unit of the Canadian Cancer Society is a dedicated team of 1,200 volunteers, and I have to say, they're true angels for cancer patients and their families. More than a friend to men, women and children in this dark time, these volunteers are a vital part of the health care system. Last year they provided 3,500 free rides to cancer appointments. In total, volunteer drivers in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville drove 300,000 kilometres, taking patients for life-saving treatments. I can't imagine how the system would work without these volunteers.

On behalf of cancer patients, their families and all those in my riding whose lives they've touched, I extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone involved with the Canadian Cancer Society in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville and beyond.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai le plaisir de parler d'une initiative extraordinaire dans ma circonscription d'Etobicoke-Nord.

Speaker, I'd like to salute both the minister and the Ministry of Health for a \$3.4-million contribution—fortification—of the Rexdale Community Health Centre. This money will go towards new infrastructure investments in the Jamestown satellite. It's going to be an extraordinary addition to the 11 other agencies that are housed at the Rexdale hub—health and social service agencies. As well, this will also support improvements to the Kipling-Dixon satellite that will expand the space available for delivering high-quality health care services.

The improvements, of course, as you can imagine, are across a wide range of services: primary health care, health promotion services and diabetes education, among a number of other programs. As you'll know, community health centres focus on helping at-risk populations and those particularly coping with mental health and addiction issues.

This particular centre will help to bridge the gap presented by poverty, language barriers, geography, culture and even work schedules, and will contribute to transportation, child care and housing. It's ensuring the right care at the right time at the right price across not only my riding of Etobicoke North, with the Jamestown satellite and the Rexdale hub, but of course across Ontario.

We have 101 community health centres, and they're just getting stronger. Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

JAMES CARSON

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize Wasaga Beach elementary school teacher James Carson for his crusade to rollerblade 2,200 kilometres across the province to raise money for the Canadian Cancer Society. On his own initiative, Mr. Carson has begun fundraising for what he anticipates will be a several-weeks-long journey during the summer of 2014. He will travel from Kenora to make his way back to Wasaga Beach, where he will receive a final police escort from Constable Mark Kinney on his return. Mr. Carson is making this selfless journey as a result of a number of friends and family members that have been diagnosed with cancer.

In a news article, he recently explained why he's committed to this cause: "Cancer connects people because everybody has been affected. People usually know someone who is a survivor, has lost someone to cancer, or is going through treatment. Even my students have had personal experiences. It's powerful and it affects people in a lot of ways."

People from around Wasaga Beach and beyond are cheering Mr. Carson on and are extremely proud of their local teacher. Without question, James's upbeat approach to fundraising has gained him an admirable reputation throughout the community and the province. I know I speak for all members of this Legislature in congratulating him on giving so much of himself to such a great cause. He should be proud that he's making a huge difference.

For more information about Mr. Carson's journey or to follow his progress, please visit his Canadian Cancer Society web page or his Facebook page. I posted the details on my website at jimwilsonmmp.com.

Good luck, Mr. Carson.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. I too would like to welcome, in

the east and west galleries, our visitors from the Sikh association. We're glad you're here.

We're glad all of our visitors come to join us at all times, and I do have a special announcement. A very special delegation has joined us now from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions of Kenya. Please join me in welcoming our guests. Thank you for being here.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE SIKH

Mr. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month / Projet de loi 52, Loi proclamant le mois d'avril Mois du patrimoine sikh.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, this would give Ontario an opportunity to be a leader in Canada. If we enact this bill, this would be the first bill in all of Canada which would be an ongoing Sikh heritage bill.

Sikhs have lived in Canada for over 100 years. They represent a dynamic population in Ontario. April is an important month for the Sikh community. In this month, Sikh Canadians celebrate Vaisakhi, which marks the creation of the Khalsa and the Sikh articles of faith. Canadians celebrate this across Canada, across Ontario.

By proclaiming the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month, the province of Ontario recognizes the important contributions that Sikh Canadians have made to Ontario's social, economic, political and cultural fabric.

Sikh Heritage Month would give us an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about Sikh Canadians and the important role they have played and will continue to play in communities across Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VAISAKHI

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize Vaisakhi in Ontario and around the world, which falls on April 13 of this year.

Vaisakhi Day marks the day in 1699 that Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th guru, laid down the foundation for the Khalsa order. It also marks the day that Sikhs were given the distinct identity and code of conduct to live by, which includes the five Ks. This is both a holy time and a time

to celebrate, as members of Ontario's Sikh community mark this significant day with music and prayer.

I am honoured, Mr. Speaker, to be standing next to my esteemed colleague Vic Dhillon, member for Brampton West, who introduced nine years ago the Khalsa Day Act in the Ontario Legislature, which I think all of us here should be very proud of.

Vaisakhi is a time for renewal and reflection of values of the Sikh faith, which include community service, hard work, an honest life and a quest to better one's life for one's children. Vaisakhi means many things to many people. This day is also observed as a day of thanks when farmers pay tribute, thanking God for the abundant harvest and praying for future prosperity.

Let us celebrate the wisdom, humility and contribution of this vibrant and engaged community here in Ontario. Ontario appreciates the vision and values continuously demonstrated by the Sikh community.

This government and the people of Ontario understand that diversity is Ontario's greatest strength. Diversity enriches our culture and nurtures the formation of strong communities. In Ontario we recognize and celebrate our differences, and we are pleased to celebrate Vaisakhi on April 13 of this year with over 100,000 members of the Sikh community.

I'd like to thank the Sikh community and everyone here in the Legislature for recognizing this important day. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's an honour to stand here today. First of all, I'd like to welcome again the members of the Canadian Sikh Association who are joining us here in the Legislature.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, I'd like to extend my best wishes to Ontario's vibrant Sikh community as they celebrate Vaisakhi.

On April 14, families and friends will gather to mark the birth of Khalsa. In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh Ji unified the Sikh faith and did away with the caste system. He created a code of conduct for the faith based on values such as justice, peace, courage and community service. These are values that all Ontarians share, and values that have led our Sikh community to be leaders in business, public service, academia and so much more.

I have had at least a dozen opportunities over the last year to join with members of our Sikh community in Ontario as we've talked about how we can improve the fortune of Ontario's small business owners, and I had the incredible good fortune of celebrating Diwali at various gurdwaras and events late last year.

As I've joined the Sikh community for events, I've found a fierce commonality of spirit with not only my values but Conservative values. They have a powerful commitment to our democratic process, a strong belief in hard work and a great entrepreneurial spirit. On one of my first visits to a gurdwara, one of the members explained it to me this way: A needy man is never turned away, but it is an honour to succeed through hard work.

This year, I'll have the honour of taking part in Nagar Kirtans and will be celebrating with the Sikh community. I've had the opportunity to travel to Brampton and Mississauga to meet with community leaders there and visit their gurdwaras, and I've seen the strong sense of unity that ties their community together.

As a guy who came to Ontario 20 years ago from a very different community in Riverview, New Brunswick, the Sikh celebrations which I've had the honour of participating in have truly ingrained in me the sense of how rich our Canadian tapestry is in Ontario. My first festival of lights opened my eyes to the incredible impression that our Sikh community has left on this great province.

I'd like to recognize the Canadian Sikh Association for all the great work that they do advocating for their community and for their leadership on a lot of issues that matter to Sikhs across Ontario and all over Canada.

In the members' galleries and upstairs as well, here in the public galleries, we have many members of the Sikh community from across Ontario. I'd like to mention just a few of them. We have Baljit Singh Ghuman, the chair of the Canadian Sikh Association. We also have Balkaranjit Singh Gill, the president of the Guru Nanak Mission Centre in Brampton, and Jasbir Singh, president of the Guru Sikh Sangat in Hamilton.

Once again, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, I'd like to wish Ontario's Sikh community a happy Vaisakhi. Currently, actually, our leader, Mr. Hudak, is touring the Gursikh Sabha Canada gurdwara in Markham/Scarborough this afternoon.

Vaisakhi di lakh lakh Vadhai.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, again I'd like to introduce and welcome the Canadian Sikh Association members. I'll begin with Baljit Singh Ghuman, the chair of the Canadian Sikh Association, Balkaranjit Singh Gill, the president of the Guru Nanak Mission Centre in Brampton, as well as Jasbir Singh, president of the Guru Sikh Sangat in Hamilton.

Mr. Speaker, Vaisakhi is a very important celebration. On a cultural note, it marks the spring harvest in South Asia, and it is celebrated by many communities across South Asia, but it is a particularly and distinctly Sikh celebration, as it marks one of the most important celebrations in the Sikh spiritual faith. It is the celebration of the creation of Khalsa. The Nagar Kirtans and celebrations that we'll see in the coming weeks and the coming months are also known as Khalsa Day celebrations. The historical significance is that during the Vaisakhi season of 1699, the 10th and last spiritual teacher or guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, created what is known as the Khalsa and the Sikh articles of faith.

A Sikh who wishes to become initiated into the Sikh spirituality is known as an amritdhari and becomes a member of the Khalsa order. The Khalsa order is a unique concept, in that it is one of our principles as Khalsa that it is a human responsibility to not only pursue your own spiritual advancement, but it is a responsibility and duty of all humans to seek justice and equality for all

and to commit yourself to resisting oppression of any sort. That is a commitment that one makes as a Khalsa and is one of the reasons why we celebrate Khalsa Day and Vaisakhi—because it is a celebration of freedom, of justice and of the tireless and relentless pursuit of equality for all.

The term “Khalsa” originates from a language and a word that represents “sovereign” or “free.” When we celebrate Khalsa Day, in actuality we’re celebrating freedom and the concept that all human beings are born sovereign, are born free.

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There was a tradition that existed in South Asia that people were born into a particular family or a particular clan, and that would prohibit them from accessing resources in society. That system was known as the caste system. In the Khalsa, or the Sikh philosophy, one of the essential goals was to eradicate this oppressive system that prohibited people from accessing places of prayer, from accessing resources and from participating in society. Equality is one of the fundamental, bedrock hallmarks of the Sikh spirituality.

One of our essential elements as we celebrate Vaisakhi and celebrate Khalsa Day is that we must commit ourselves to selfless service. The concept of seva is the idea that every human being should commit themselves in their day-to-day lives and in a concerted way to giving back to humanity, to giving back to their fellow brother or sister.

One of the most important things—and I take a pause at this, because it is a continuing issue here in Canada, in Ontario and across the world—is the oppression and the continued subjugation of women that exists across the world. That is something the Sikh faith spoke very, very strongly against—that for any society to progress requires equal treatment of women, requires us to recognize that all human beings are equal regardless of gender, regardless of caste, regardless of colour. That’s an essential, fundamental principle that I’m very proud to stand for today. When we celebrate Vaisakhi, we celebrate that importance—

Interjections.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: If you look, at the time, there were many injustices occurring against various people, particularly women, and that was an essential element of creating the Khalsa—in which every man or woman is able to participate in any and every spiritual tradition without any barriers. That’s a thing that I’m very proud of, and I wish to share that with the Legislative Assembly.

In Punjabi, I’d like to share a couple of words. One of the most important quotes we talk of when we talk of the 10th guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, was [remarks in Punjabi]—the idea that recognizing the entire human race as one, recognizing that we’re all one brotherhood and sisterhood is an essential element, and Guru Gobind Singh Ji spoke about that very, very often.

When we look at the unique identity of the Sikh faith, it’s something that does stand out. We see the five

articles of faith, dastar, the turban. These elements are all actually signs or flags that the person that you see with those unique articles of faith is someone who stands up for principles of equality, justice for all, resisting oppression—values that we all share as Canadians, as Ontarians. So when you see someone and you celebrate Vaisakhi, remember you’re celebrating these important values that are also Canadian and Ontarian values that we all cherish.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It is now time for petitions. Let’s change things up and look at a different position by asking the member from Durham to give us a petition.

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m somewhat surprised and unprepared.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. John O’Toole: This petition has been read before, but it does make the point:

“Whereas the United Senior Citizens of Ontario has expressed its concerns over the high costs of parking at hospitals in Ontario on behalf of its more than 300,000 members; and

“Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income and cannot afford these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association Journal has said in an editorial that parking fees are a barrier to health care and add additional stress to patients who have enough to deal with;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Ontario’s members of provincial Parliament and the” Kathleen Wynne “government take action to abolish parking fees for all seniors when visiting hospitals.”

I’m pleased to sign this, support it and present it to Annie, one of the pages.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I am pleased to present this petition from the people of Nickel Belt. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government” is making PET scanning “a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under certain conditions...; and

“Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans” are performed “in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences

North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my nice page, Kamryn, to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, I have received more “Stop the Trades Tax” petitions. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I support this petition.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: “Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children’s aid societies; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children’s aid societies; and

“Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children’s aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children’s aid societies.”

I couldn’t agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I will give it to page Annie to take it to the Clerk—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): Thank you very much. Petitions?

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario relating to the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the town of Newmarket official plan was developed through extensive community consultation and commits the town council to manage growth based on specific principles;

“Whereas section 1.3.3 of the official plan states that growth should occur in a way that not only increases the quality of life for existing residents but also provides a functional environment for the future by protecting and enhancing existing natural features and systems;

“Whereas a key principle set out in section 2.1 of the official plan is a commitment to protect and strengthen existing neighbourhoods;

“Whereas section 3.2.1 states that the objective of the stable residential area policies of the official plan is to sustain and enhance the character and identity of existing residential communities;

“Whereas the town of Newmarket has received an application from Marianneville Development Ltd. that, if approved, would impose an additional 730 housing units into the existing, long-established Glenway community...;

“Whereas the Places to Grow Act, 2005 and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006 provide for a significant portion of new growth to take place through intensification of built-up areas;

“We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013 ... that amends the Places to Grow Act, 2005 to provide that a decision made by a municipal council is final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board if the following conditions are satisfied:

“The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality’s official plan with respect to land that is designated for one or more of the following: stable residential area, and parks and open space.

“The municipal council has passed a resolution stating that the requested official plan amendment would not be in the best interests of the municipality.”

Speaker, I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition, and I was pleased to propose this legislation, which will be debated next Thursday, April 18.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

“Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses, and local economies;

“Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

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“Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

“Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

“Whereas, regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services.”

I support and affix my signature to this, and will present it to page Stacey.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents and municipalities across Ontario want the ability to veto and/or plan for industrial wind turbines in their community; and

“Whereas ratepayers in Ontario want all forms of energy generation to be affordable and reliable; and

“Whereas residents of Ontario want the feed-in tariff program to be eliminated; and

“Whereas residents of Ontario want to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine from the development of wind turbines;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson’s private member’s bill, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and call committee hearings immediately on the bill.”

I totally agree with this petition. I affix my signature, and I’ll send it to the desk with Louis.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario.

“Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

“Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don’t complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

“Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system...”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman’s mandate to include Ontario’s long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask—it’s back to page Kamryn to bring it to the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: This is to the Legislature of Ontario, calling for a 10-year jail sentence for people convicted of possessing an unlawful handgun.

“Whereas only police officers, members of the Canadian Armed Forces or legally authorized persons are allowed to carry handguns;

“Whereas there is no legitimate reason for any person to carry or possess a handgun that is stolen or illegally obtained;

“Whereas handguns are a grave danger to the safety of the citizens of Toronto and Ontario;

“Whereas too many innocent people are being victimized by criminals carrying and using unlawful handguns that they have no legal right to possess;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the provincial government to call upon the federal government and Prime Minister Harper to enact legislation that would impose a 10-year jail sentence to anyone convicted of possessing an unlawful handgun.”

I support this petition; I affix my name to it.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

Mr. Todd Smith: I’m so pleased to be able to present this petition on behalf of a former page here at the Legislative Assembly, Olivia Fox from my riding of Prince Edward–Hastings—specifically, in Prince Edward county. It reads like this:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the decision to prorogue the first session of the 40th Parliament on October 15, 2012, forced 20 Ontario students to retire their posts as legislative pages after just one day on their job. These students prepared months, if not years, for the chance to work as a page in their eighth grade, and it was all for naught after just one day;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“For the Legislative Assembly to reappoint these students as pages once the Legislature resumes, to allow them to fulfill their duties and dreams of becoming a legislative page.”

I’m happy to sign this and hand it over to page Sophia.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of the residents of my wonderful riding of Essex.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Avastin is approved for use in the treatment of glioblastoma by Health Canada; and

“Whereas Avastin is currently covered for this treatment by the provincial governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia; and

“Whereas in a clinical study Mr. Kevin Graham had a positive response to this medication and his tumour stopped growing; and

“Whereas Mr. Graham and other glioblastoma patients have not had positive responses to other chemotherapy drugs currently covered by the government of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We respectfully request that Cancer Care Ontario be directed to reassess the importance of funding Avastin for brain cancer patients in Ontario to ensure equal access for Ontarians to the benefits of this treatment."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and wish Mr. Graham success in his treatment.

ELECTRICITY GENERATION

Mr. Mike Colle: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Electricity System Operator is poised to procure electricity generation valued at hundreds of billions of dollars in the coming months and years; and

"Whereas community enterprises for electricity generation are democratically controlled legal entities established for the purpose of mobilizing communities and financial resources to consider local electricity generation opportunities with a view to providing benefits to the community and Ontario as a whole; and

"Whereas the commercialization of our natural resources, grid capacity and power purchase capacity can impair Ontarians' ability to mitigate the impacts of clean energy products; and

"Whereas community enterprises provide for local control over environmental assessment processes; and....

"Whereas the proposed renewable energy on crown land policy may encourage and prioritize community economic benefits from water power development and other clean energy projects;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support a community energy act to help facilitate the mobilization of communities and financial resources for the purposes of developing community enterprises for electricity generation."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here. It was presented by Mike Acton of Acton's Service Centre in Watford. I have a great number of signatures on it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or" even up to "\$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to" a maximum of "\$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To suspend the decision to" significantly "increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

SPRINGWATER PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we oppose the termination of the operating budget for Springwater Provincial Park in Springwater township on March 31, 2013;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the park remain operating and facilities such as the animal sanctuary, cabins/shelters, playground equipment and ground maintenance remain intact and operating."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and I'll certainly sign it. I thank you for your time.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MINING AMENDMENT ACT (RESOURCES PROCESSED IN ONTARIO), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MINES (RESSOURCES TRANSFORMÉES EN ONTARIO)

Mr. Mantha moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to amend the Mining Act to require resources to be processed in Ontario / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines afin d'exiger que les ressources soient transformées en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First I want to thank all those that have joined us here today to listen to this very important debate, which really impacts this province greatly.

I want to set the tone quickly that with this bill, we are not looking at building walls around Ontario; we're actually looking at opening up walls around Ontario.

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We are definitely not looking at creating problems; we are looking at creating opportunities. This will create benefits for this province—endless benefits—and the jobs are going to be countless. I start that in order to get everybody on the same page, so that we know where we're going with this particular piece of legislation.

Now, I myself am one of those individuals who have been affected by the manufacturing sector and the loss of jobs. I have had some difficult decisions to make with my family. I know many friends, family members—cousins, aunts, uncles—neighbours and communities that have been devastated by certain policies that have been developed throughout northern Ontario in many sectors, specifically in the manufacturing and mining sectors. You know, for years I have seen, unfortunately, that it continues to happen in many communities across my riding and across northern Ontario: closures of sawmills, paper mills, mines, refineries and manufacturing facilities. Without the appropriate public policies in place, the loss of jobs and economic prosperity is likely to continue.

This bill is one step in the right direction to making Ontario a leader in resource refinery and a prosperous place once again. How is this bill going to make Ontario an attractive place to do resource refinery? This bill is going to give Ontario a role in its own destiny and autonomy over our own natural resources. This bill will force the government to recognize infrastructure deficits and realize the opportunities lost right here in our own backyard.

This bill is so simple that it is only a change of one word. Right now, section 91 of the Mining Act states that all minerals and ores mined in the province need to be processed in Canada unless companies request exemptions due to special circumstances. Under this model, companies take Ontario's valuable natural resources and then turn to the government to ask for an exemption to ship resources abroad for refining purposes.

Various levels of governments in Canada now know the challenges mining companies are facing in refining materials right here at home. And while some have granted exemptions and are now making commitments to infrastructure development to address these shortfalls, provinces like Ontario have not shown the same commitment. And that is a shame, because we have unprecedented opportunities with the Ring of Fire right in our backyard. If the province doesn't develop a plan to give companies the opportunity to process resources here, then we will miss out on job creation for the north that is so desperately needed. We need this new hope.

Once this bill is passed, a company taking these precious minerals and ores from Ontario must ask the minister of Ontario's mines if they can have the exemption to process not just outside of Canada but outside of the province. This change is simple and will allow the minister to see the shortfalls and infrastructure challenges and give him the opportunity to address these and make Ontario's economy stronger.

This is not a unique concept, and we're not reinventing the wheel here. This very same legislation has been

implemented in other provinces—provinces that realize the possibility of job creation and stimulation of their economies. It's true that this bill will not create jobs overnight. I won't sugar-coat the serious challenges we face in this province, making Ontario a more attractive place for mining investment and refining.

But what this bill will do is give Ontario the incentive to develop the potential of Ontario to be a leader in mining refinery. If the Ontario government chooses to realize its potential—and hopefully they will—the province will have the possibility to create jobs and reinvigorate an industry that has experienced many job losses.

Ontario used to be the hub of mining refinery. We used to have smelting facilities in Timmins, but 700 jobs lost, and Quebec sends their thanks to the Ontario Liberal government for their Quebec job action plan. Other provinces, states and countries are standing by waiting, pen in hand, just waiting for their job creation plan to come through, either due to action or inaction by this government.

We also have steel plants in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie that used to employ double and triple what they employ now. There is a possibility of updating the facilities in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie to produce stainless steel here in Canada. Currently, there is no chromite mining or ferrochrome production in North America. But there is an established market for both chromite and ferrochrome. The Americas import 250,000 tonnes of chromite ore and 450,000 tonnes of ferrochrome annually. The primary driver for chromite is stainless steel production. China is currently the major producer of chromite.

Instead of mining minerals and ores here, shipping them to China and then purchasing back the final product, Ontario has the opportunity to see the project from start to finish and reap the benefits. Ontario has the skilled labour and the facilities, and we should be taking advantage of the opportunities that come only once in a lifetime. We have the existing infrastructure in this province, and this infrastructure could be used to refine our mining products, if in fact this government wants to enact a job creation policy instead of doing others a favour.

There are endless opportunities to create jobs for Ontario in the mining sector, and this bill is a step in the right direction. This bill will not scare mining investment away. It will not intimidate investors. If anything, the passage of this bill will signal to mining investors that Ontario is ready to take on the challenges in the mining sector and get Ontario back to work. It is simply the change of one word, allowing exemptions to be granted from the province of origin for these precious materials. The burden will not solely be shifted to the backs of companies wanting to invest in our province. The province needs to recognize their part in the mining industry, and that part does include developing infrastructure and lowering electricity costs and barriers to business.

In order to realize these challenges and effectively deal with them, Ontario would benefit by having auton-

omy over our natural resources. This autonomy comes with granting exemptions to the Mining Act. The simple change to the Mining Act will hold the government accountable and put their feet to the fire to create jobs in this sector. Change needs to be implemented. Investment needs to be made and a plan must be put into action. With the province having a role in the decision to allow mining companies to move minerals and ores out of the province, Ontario will have to face these challenges.

It's called "value added" for a reason. As a government, we should be striving to achieve the maximum value for each non-renewable resource we pull from our own land. It's not just traditional jobs that this action will create. There are many spin-off jobs in many sectors in all regions of the province which will benefit from this, from logistics to construction and design, to engineering to business to trades and health care. The opportunities really never end.

This job creation and growth in other sectors of the economy can all be achieved with a direct commitment by this government to support the industry and collaborate with investors and mining companies by making investment, mining, refining and manufacturing attractive to them.

During my time as northern development and mines critic, I've had the opportunity to travel to many different sites, including the Ring of Fire, the Esker camp and the Noront site. In 2007, the Ontario mining company Noront Resources Ltd. discovered large deposits of nickel, copper, platinum and palladium in the Ring of Fire. In 2010, the Ontario government announced they would open a large chromite deposit for development. Touring the site was a very interesting and eye-opening experience for me. I was impressed by the environmentally sound practices I saw and the skilled and diverse workforce that was present.

The Ring of Fire development has great potential for creating jobs and improving northern Ontario's economy. However, we need to ensure that the Ontario government facilitates development by providing incentives to companies to do business in Ontario while respecting environmental assessments, consulting with First Nation communities and protecting jobs—and that starts in our own backyard.

As it stands, mining developments are hindered by government inaction when it comes to building the infrastructure required to transport minerals. For all companies with a stake in the Ring of Fire, it has been detrimental that a transportation corridor has been slow to materialize. We have the infrastructure to refine here in Ontario, and doing so can increase business for our railways—you remember the ONTC?—and create more jobs. All of this can be done in an environmentally respectful manner. If we plan responsibly, we will see real long-term improvements for Ontarians and the northern economy.

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I want to make sure that our government doesn't rob Ontarians of jobs by allowing raw materials to be shipped

overseas for processing to a country which may have poor environmental and worker protections. Again, we should be capitalizing on those opportunities in our backyard.

Processing minerals requires a high-skill workforce and is also a high-energy consumption process. With the high price of electricity, mining companies are at risk of taking high-paying jobs offshore, where the cost of electricity is lower. Several mining companies have made it clear that the price of electricity is too high and that they are exploring the possibilities of moving their operations out of the province.

The average industrial rate in Toronto is 9.59 cents per kilowatt hour. In northern Ontario it's 8.69 cents per kilowatt hour. However, in Quebec, the average industrial rate is 4.56 cents per kilowatt hour, and in Manitoba, 3.59 cents per kilowatt hour. Need I say anything more? The result is that companies are leaving or will not reinvest in Ontario, especially northern Ontario, where industries tend to be more energy-intensive. Electricity rates are also a significant hurdle for municipalities when attempting to attract investment and the value-added parts of the resources in the manufacturing sector, and are a barrier to northern Ontario economic diversification.

The Ontario government needs to provide competitive electricity prices for companies as an incentive to keep the processing jobs in Ontario. I have stood repeatedly in this Legislature to address the concerns over job creation and the challenges that companies face when they operate in the mining industry in Ontario. How many more times will we have to debate before we get serious and commit to creating jobs and developing the Ring of Fire?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to join this debate. Certainly, I agree with my colleague who has brought this forward for debate that it's a very important debate that we're having today. Where we don't agree, I think, is on the implications of the proposed legislation that he's bringing forward. I will do my best to explain that in the time that I'll be using today. I hope to have some time for my parliamentary assistant to say a few words, as well.

But let me begin our government's response, to the MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin's private member's bill by saying, and I think I can say it with some confidence, that I think all members of this Legislature want to see that the greatest value-added benefits are derived from mining activities in the province of Ontario. I mean, this is an industry that already provides over 27,000 direct jobs and 50,000 indirect jobs to the people of this province. Our mineral production sector is worth now about \$11 billion, up from \$5.3 billion in 2003. That makes us the top jurisdiction in that regard, which means we are continuing to see great investment and support.

May I also say, and I say to all my colleagues, that our government's goal of increasing these value-added

benefits is reflected in the work that we have done to establish a diamond processing facility in Ontario, an extremely specialized form of processing where we are now processing 10% of the diamonds that are taken out of the ground from the Victor diamond mine near Attawapiskat. That is certainly a significant move that we want to see continuing to move forward.

That very strong commitment to add value to the mining industry is reflected in the discussions that we are having with Cliffs Natural Resources, specifically regarding their \$3.3-billion proposal which would, among other things, provide for the construction of a ferrochrome processing facility in Capreole, which would be the first in North America and something that indeed would obviously bring incredible economic value-added to the mining sector—so hundreds of jobs in construction and certainly hundreds of jobs on an ongoing basis.

Here we are today: All three parties in the Legislature, I think, have common goals in that regard. Certainly our government is taking very significant action to see those value-added opportunities increase in the province. But we find ourselves today debating a private member's bill by my colleague and the critic from Algoma-Manitoulin that would require, if it became law, that all ores and minerals taken from the ground in Ontario must be treated and refined in this province. For those who are not familiar with the mining industry, it might seem like an interesting, if not a good, idea. Those would not be aware, necessarily, of the thousands and thousands of well-paying Ontario jobs that rely on the free movement of minerals in our country and around the world.

I did get asked a question yesterday by my colleague, and I said to him at that time that what we are debating today would be putting us on dangerous ground. Quite frankly, I meant that when I said it. By that, Mr. Speaker, what I meant was that this legislation—however well intentioned it may be, and I appreciate that you and I are not on the same page on the impact of this. The fact is, if it became law, I really believe it could lose a significant number of jobs in this province.

We all understand—I believe we do—that Ontario and certainly the mining industry is very much a part of the global economy. What I mentioned earlier as the free movement of minerals is a large part of the reason why thousands of Ontarians right now are employed by companies that process materials from other provinces and other countries: the USA, Mexico, Chile and Australia. To put it fairly bluntly, if I may, if we were to enact legislation that required all companies to process all their materials in Ontario, we could very well see retaliation by other jurisdictions blocking our access to those materials, potentially threatening thousands of jobs here in the province. That is something we've heard from many of the industry leaders.

Many Ontarians perhaps don't know this—I'm sure that all my colleagues across the way know this—but four out of five of Ontario's largest mineral processing facilities receive two thirds or more of their feed from outside the province, and their economic viability

depends very much on the import of those minerals into Ontario. There are all kinds of examples, and I'll give you a couple of them. At Xstrata's Falconbridge smelter in greater Sudbury, over 70% of the copper and nickel smelted is imported from outside Ontario.

Interjection.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Xstrata employs 1,200 people—the member for Timmins-James Bay knows that—in greater Sudbury. It certainly is responsible for a significant amount of secondary employment.

Cameco Corp. operates the world's largest commercial uranium refinery in Ontario. They import 100% of their uranium concentrate from mines in Saskatchewan, Australia and the United States. They employ 560 people at the Blind River and Port Hope conversion facilities.

You mentioned the steel industry. You've got three members of your party, the third party, who represent people who work in the steel industry, including the leader of the third party. Whether you're talking about Essar Steel in Algoma or you're talking about ArcelorMittal Dofasco in Hamilton, there are thousands of jobs in the steel industry that rely on the import of their materials to maintain those well-paying jobs.

Again, if we put this piece of legislation in place, I do truly fear we would have retaliation from other companies and other jurisdictions, and that's a kind of retaliation that I don't think we should be in any way risking.

Here are the facts from my perspective, and I do think this is shared by many in the industry, many in the union movement and many of the workers as well. Specifically the mining and certainly the steel industries require the flexibility we presently have in the legislation to maintain these jobs. Let me be clear, too, Speaker: If all the companies were required to process their product in Ontario, it would result in a loss of investor confidence. Again, we don't agree on that, but I feel very strongly that that's the case, based on the conversations that I've had. It could result in potential mine closures, and obviously it could result in the loss of significant employment. I feel very strongly about this.

This legislation has been debated before in the Legislature. There may be a nuance to this piece, but it has been debated before and it has been defeated before.

I want to say to my colleague: There's no question in my mind that you in any way have an intention of putting those valued jobs in peril. We are on different sides of the position on this issue. I do recognize as well, from our conversations we've had over the last couple of days leading up to today, let alone in your remarks today, that you certainly don't see the legislation you're proposing as having the negative impact it would, but I do. I've given this a great deal of thought. I'm standing here, before all members in the Legislature, quite frankly imploring them to vote against this proposed bill, to vote against it, to protect jobs in the province and to support the continued growth and development of the mining industry.

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Certainly, there's no question that we all need to continue to work together to see the greatest value-added

opportunities and benefits for all Ontarians to come, particularly from exciting developments such as the Ring of Fire. But I don't want us to take a bad step back.

I do want to actually reference, if I may—I don't want to take too much of my colleague's time. I had an interesting conversation with Peter Poppinga, who is the CEO of Vale, who reached out to me. He was very concerned about this legislation as well. Vale has made a very significant and strong commitment to the province of Ontario, and has invested I think close to \$3 billion in the province, and more to be invested as well. Certainly, they do the bulk of their processing and refining in the province of Ontario, but the truth is that this is, as much as anything else, about stability and the need to maintain the flexibility that is in their place.

I know you all understand the challenges that one has when one is in government. You were once in government. You recognize that finding that balance—but the fact is, I feel very strongly that we will be taking a step back by supporting this legislation, and a very, very significant one, in fact. Quite frankly, what I don't want to see is us being put in a position where it stops us in our tracks, so to speak, in terms of mining development opportunities, let alone manufacturing opportunities in the province.

Thank you for the opportunity to debate this legislation. I feel, obviously, very strongly that we should not be supporting it, and certainly I will not be. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to join in the debate on Bill 43. I'd like to start out by agreeing with my NDP counterpart from Algoma-Manitoulin and fellow northern development and mines critic that the Ontario Mining Act is in need of revision. There's no doubt that there's room for improvement, particularly with the new prospecting regulations that came into effect April 1. In fact, I just recently attended the north-western prospectors' conference. The big thing I heard about at that conference was the uncertainty being created and how a lot of junior mining companies are currently looking for other jurisdictions to invest in because of that uncertainty.

With this in mind, I don't believe that Bill 43 will help the Ontario mining industry or keep more jobs in the province, as the NDP have claimed. When implementing legislation such as this, you need to consider the Ontario mining industry as a whole. It is complex, and one seemingly insignificant change, substituting "Ontario" for "Canada" in the current act, by no means provides the comprehensive and in-depth thinking that is needed to make a difference for mining and refining operations in Ontario.

The province of Ontario cannot afford protectionist policies. You can't gamble our economic recovery on untested strategy. Our economy is inextricably linked with our neighbouring provinces and the United States. Our steel mills, as just one example, already rely on feedstock from other jurisdictions to ensure that they run

at full capacity and are able to maintain their production and their jobs.

While the consideration of cross-border trade and avoiding a potential trade war over such policies are a concern, to say the least, what is even more important, I feel, is the negative message that would be sent to the international business community. Mining companies in particular make investment plans that are contingent on stable political climates. A stable business climate, free of political unpredictability, was a historic strength of Ontario. It is what helped us rank as the number one mining jurisdiction in the world back in the year 2000, back when our leader, Tim Hudak, was the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Since then, under the current government, we have steadily slipped. We're currently now at number 16, and life has been made harder for the mining industry in Ontario. Many will remember the famous diamond tax that came into effect in 2007—just, I might add, as the De Beers Victor mine was about to open. Just after they spent a billion dollars, the current government brought in a brand new tax. Imagine running your own business and then having a 13% cut from your profits, from your budget and your projected business plan, all with the single stroke of a pen. That is exactly what happened in the diamond industry in Ontario back in 2007. It had a ripple effect and undoubtedly made companies more wary about investing in Ontario, especially over the long term.

The diamond tax should serve as a cautionary tale against implementing short-sighted policies that end up having industry-wide effects. If Bill 43 were to be passed into legislation, the industry-wide impacts would be significant. And in the long run, once companies have adjusted, would Ontario really come out ahead? I think not, and nothing the NDP has offered provides any evidence that it will.

There's mention of the job-creating potential of the Ring of Fire. I assure you that its great potential will be realized in Ontario without protectionist policies. We instead need to focus on creating an environment that business wants to be a part of, a place where mining companies compete, choose to locate their operations and provide stable, well-paying jobs.

The last time we debated this bill, Xstrata Copper had just pulled the plug on its Timmins smelter and moved some 670 jobs to Quebec. Many critics pointed to Ontario's high hydro rates as the deciding factor in the eventual relocation. We instead focused our efforts on tackling the uncompetitive hydro rates in northern Ontario and across the province.

Couldn't we achieve the same goals while still allowing companies the flexibility they need to compete and operate? We have to work to make Ontario more competitive in order to attract business, not simply pass legislation that will attempt to force companies to locate and work here in Ontario.

Bill 43 is not good business and will continue to make it harder to do business in the province of Ontario. Mr.

Speaker, the PC caucus will not be supporting this private member's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's a privilege to be able to rise and speak in support of Bill 43, which will ensure that the mineral resources that are extracted in Ontario are processed here, unless the company is granted an exemption from the minister.

I believe the passage of this bill is essential to enable us to maximize the benefit of our natural and human resources in Ontario. We are never going to be a "have" province again unless we take immediate steps to protect Ontario's jobs. This means saying no to the outsourcing of Ministry of Natural Resources jobs to Tennessee. This means making sure that the federal government closes the loopholes it created that allow foreign workers to literally take away our jobs. And it means ensuring that our mineral wealth, something that is owned by each and every one of us in Ontario, is used to create jobs in Ontario, not in the United States, not in Mexico, not in China and not in another province.

This is mineral wealth that is going to make large corporations billions of dollars in profits. These corporations want our resources, but they absolutely cannot be given away without us asking a fair price in return. That fair price is us saying, "Only if those of us who collectively own these resources have a fair share of the benefits." Nowhere is that more important than in the northwest's Ring of Fire, where the mineral wealth is overwhelming, yet so many of the communities in whose traditional territory the riches lie are living in overwhelming, abject poverty.

Premier Wynne wants to be known as the social justice Premier. To me, social justice means fairness, it means equality and it means ensuring that everybody has the resources they need to succeed. It means ensuring that people living in poverty have access to the jobs and skills training that can help them get out of poverty; it means ensuring that they have access to clean, safe drinking water; and it means ensuring that they have access to basic infrastructure, such as the electricity grid, mold-free schools and safe housing. It means ensuring that people living in communities like Neskantaga, Webequie, Pickle Lake, Sioux Lookout, Ignace, Dryden, Emo, Rainy River, Red Lake and so many others know that there's a job waiting for them.

How do we accomplish this? By saying very firmly and very clearly that these are our resources, and we will use them to accomplish our collective goals as a community, as a region and as a province.

Speaker, that is what this bill does today. It takes important steps toward restoring this province to the economic glory it once enjoyed and becoming a "have" province again. I urge each and every one of the MPPs in this House today to support this bill.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Just briefly, I do, like the minister, appreciate the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for bringing this forward, because I think it really highlights mining, which isn't highlighted enough. Not enough people in Ontario understand how critically important mining is to the economic well-being of this province.

All you have to do is, if you go, as the member said, to the PDAC conference just down the street here—32,000 mining industry individuals come here from all over the world every year. They don't get one line of print from the local newspapers—some 32,000 people who want to invest in Ontario, want to invest in the mining industry. The other connection is just the number of direct and indirect jobs in mining: 27,000 direct jobs, 55,000 indirect jobs. Mining is really a powerhouse.

There are obviously some serious situations that we're dealing with, a lot to do with what's happening in Europe and a number of other issues. But I think the member is bringing up a very valid point: Can we find a way of getting that value-added here in Ontario? I think the minister agrees. I think the real issue is about the impact and how the industry will react and will there be retaliation? I think that's something that both of them can work on, because I think you have basically the same goal: to get the jobs, the secondary jobs, the value-added jobs to stay here in Ontario as much as possible—to find a way of doing it without sending the wrong signals to the investors and to the industry.

As I said, the member has an excellent point he's bringing forward about keeping the jobs here. The minister is also trying to make sure the jobs stay here. I think you're both working to the same goal, but how to get to it is maybe something we need to work on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to address Bill 43 today. In my riding of Nipissing, we have nearly 70 mining-related companies, including two of the largest exploration firms in the world, headquartered right in North Bay, so the importance of mining to Ontario's overall prosperity is certainly paramount to me.

I can also tell you, Speaker, that the member from Oshawa and I both share an unusual trait: We both hold prospector's licences, so I can tell you the significance of mining in Ontario is not lost on either of us. We have enjoyed the fun and excitement and—I don't know about prosperity of individual prospectors in Ontario, but I sure enjoy gold-panning in Temagami, I can tell you that.

It's obvious we need to encourage mining and mining-related industries in Ontario, but we can't build that industry on the basis of protectionist legislation, and thus, I cannot support this bill.

Let me give you some context, Speaker. In 2009, when I served as mayor of the city of North Bay, I led an international push to oppose the Buy American provision adopted by the Obama administration. That provision shut out northern Ontario companies, and indeed Canadian companies, from bidding on work on American government contracts, whether they had the best expertise or not.

History has shown that these types of protectionist policies hurt everyone. In the end of our battle, our American counterparts saw the light. We had many meetings down the street from here with the trade commissioner and the US ambassador, and we were able to claim an international victory. That lesson should be brought here today.

The simple fact that we cannot ignore, but that the third party would like us to, is this: The Ontario economy is integrated with other provincial economies and the United States', and we cannot implement protectionist policies and risk failure.

One of the considerations this bill fails to realize is that it could hamper the operations of existing manufacturers in the province. I know the member from Parry Sound spoke about Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie—the steel industry—and surely the member proposing this bill would not be in favour of a protectionist outcome in the steel industry.

Let me bring it a little closer to home. I spoke with Roger in Cobalt, who works at one of the smelters there, and Roger told me that almost all of the mineral that they process in Cobalt comes from the United States. So, Speaker, I would ask you, what happens to Roger and the men and women he works with in the municipality of Cobalt? When we put this bill in and the States retaliate with a similar bill, Roger has no more work in Cobalt. I think that we need to stand up for Roger and his family today and make sure this protectionist bill does not pass.

I know that the member's intent is sincere, but the bill would simply not benefit the Ontario mining industry as a whole and would send a signal of instability that we cannot afford.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What a silly argument. Currently, the Mining Act says that if you ship ore outside of Canada, you need to have ministerial permission to do it. Some of the facilities you talk about get ore from outside of Canada. Do you see them retaliating against the Canadian government or the Ontario government for having that in our legislation? What a silly argument.

The issue here, quite simply, is that we should do all that we can in this province in order to add value to our natural resources. If you look at countries around the world, Ontario is one of the few jurisdictions that don't try to do that. Look at Norway, look at Denmark, look at South Africa—look at many countries around the world. Look at the United States. What they try to do is they say, "Listen, when you have natural resources that are finite resources, that are owned by the people of the province or the state or whatever it might be, you should try to process that ore in your jurisdiction as much as humanly possible," and that is exactly what this amendment is saying. This amendment is saying that where it makes some sense, we need to make sure that the province has the hammer to be able to say to companies that

are just going to ask for an exemption, a ministerial permit to ship it to Quebec or Manitoba, that there is a requirement for them to look at how they can do it in Ontario.

Now, I agree that one of the reasons that Xstrata closed in Timmins was because of the price of energy. I agree that one of the reasons that the copper smelter is shutting down in Sudbury and we're going to be shipping all that ore outside of Ontario, all of that copper that comes out of Inco, is because of some of the regulations that were put in place by this government.

But I say to you, my friends, what you need to do is to come at it the other way, to say, here we have the Ring of Fire, we have Noront, we've got Cliffs and we've got KWG. Let's work together at looking at what the provincial government can do, what the federal government can do and what the private sector can do by coming together and saying, "How do we position this finite resource of chromite, iron ore, gold and other things that are out there so that we can add value to them?"

Why shouldn't Ontario try to become a jurisdiction that is able to get into the stainless steel business? There are thousands of jobs and billions of dollars to be had if we can take the chromite from chromite all the way to stainless steel. By allowing companies like Cliffs to say, "Oh, maybe we'll put a refinery in Sudbury, and we'll process less than half our ore here"—the rest of it is going to be put on a train and it's going to be shipped to China, and they're going to add the value in China when it comes to what they want when it comes to our natural resources.

So why don't we, rather, say, "We'll help you with electricity, we'll help you to develop infrastructure, we will help you with training as an exchange for you to follow our Ontario requirement that says you must process here in Ontario"? That way these companies get to mine, they get to reduce their costs because the infrastructure is lower, and Ontarians are able to benefit to a greater degree from what the resources can give, and that is jobs and much-needed investment in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: First of all, I want to applaud the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for bringing Bill 43 forward with best intentions. He's trying to protect and promote jobs in his riding. Ontario as a whole has over 600,000 Ontarians currently unemployed. I understand why this bill would be brought forward.

However, there are certainly some unintended consequences that I do have some concerns with. The bill amends the Ontario Mining Act, subsection 91(1), by striking out the word "Canada" and substituting the word "Ontario." Well, currently, all ores or minerals raised or removed from lands, claims or mining rights that are patented, leased or otherwise disposed of must be treated and refined in Canada. This amendment would mean that such ores or minerals must be treated and refined in Ontario.

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In and of itself this may sound like a novel idea, but there are many negative effects that this change could in fact have. This is, in essence, Speaker, a protectionist policy. Ontario is not an island but part of a confederation of provinces and territories. While we often compete with each other, we must work together with our counterparts in Legislatures around the country toward a common goal. Ontario's economy is in fact integrated with the economies of our provincial cousins and our neighbours to the south. During a time of economic crisis, we cannot afford to implement protectionist policies and risk triggering a trade war. This will only drive up the cost of goods in Ontario. Our refining operations already rely on feedstock imported from outside of the province to run at their full capacity.

The change proposed in this bill could actually end up hurting the steel industry in Ontario. For example, members from Hamilton and the member from Sault Ste. Marie can surely tell us just how important that industry is—or, sadly, was.

Speaker, the fact that we are resorting to debating protectionist policies is reflective of just how bad things are and how things have gotten in this province.

Ontario used to be the envy of the country, an economic juggernaut that drove Canada forward. Now we're lagging behind, in case the member from Timmins—James Bay may have missed that. The Ontario I believe in is the better Ontario, the one that can break down barriers to stand alongside other provinces of this great country and to engage in a little friendly competition, not put up walls to hide behind them. I believe in a better Ontario that can attract investors from around the world, ones that will create jobs all over the province, from Algoma-Manitoulin to the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex.

We in the PC Party feel that there are more effective ways of stimulating growth in the mining sector. Let's cut the red tape that gets in the way of businesses looking to set up shop and hire Ontarians. Let's make energy rates affordable so that businesses can thrive and their employees can thrive with them.

Speaker, Ontario is broken, so let's get it back working again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour for me, coming from a mining constituency, to support the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, and I'd like to also thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for championing this cause for a long time.

I'm surprised, because I expected the Tories not to read it because they don't read anything—but I'm surprised that the Liberals didn't actually read this bill, because it's not what they're saying this is. What this is, is—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, but what this is, is, before the government signs off on exporting minerals, the provin-

cial government has to sign off, so they have to justify their decision. To my neighbour in Cobalt—I'm a proud Cobalter. That's all this is. This isn't protectionist. This is forcing the government to sign off on their decisions. When you have a board of a mining company, you expect the board of directors to be responsible to the shareholders and justify their decisions.

The government, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines: We should expect the same thing from him, so when he signs off to export ore from out of this province, he has to sign off and justify his decision. If he signs off on exporting ore from the Ring of Fire, then he would be responsible to stand in this House and say why. We're not saying he can't; we're saying that he has to justify why. That's the purpose of this House. It's not about stopping; it's about justification. When and if the government signs off on the Ring of Fire and half of it goes to China instead of going—oh, it could go on rail and maybe have something to do with the ONTC, to my friend Roger in Cobalt. When we ask him, "Well, could it be that you played around way too long to actually get this thing going, or you didn't actually look at processing in Ontario?", he would have to stand in this House and explain why. If he had a good reason, that would be—that's how this works. But he would have to stand in this House and justify his reasoning.

That's what this bill does. It doesn't stop the movement of ore; it makes the minister and it makes the government accountable for its decisions in the mining sector.

We are blessed here with an abundance of wealth. We didn't create it; we were given it. It's here, but it's our responsibility to make sure that that wealth benefits all Ontarians, including the First Nations, and including the people here in Toronto and the people in Hamilton who could benefit from processing it here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was quite surprising to hear the debate this afternoon about this one-word bill. You have to realize that if you look at everybody—because mining is international. You come to Sudbury; we have over 250 mining supply companies right there in my riding. I talk to them all the time. I see them every week. Mining has gone international.

All of those companies know that the law exists, that if they're going to ship out, they're going to have to have conversations with the government, and they do this. Ore comes in and gets processed at the smelter in Sudbury, and ore leaves Sudbury and gets processed all over the world. They've had that conversation with the government. They've had that conversation with the federal government. The only thing we are changing is that this conversation—this adult conversation—will now take place with the minister sitting in front of me, with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines here in the province of Ontario.

That's all that's changing. This is not protectionist. This is not going to change investors' behaviour. You're

reading way too much into one word. The way it exists right now is that there's an adult conversation that takes place with the federal government. We are saying that given that this is a provincial resource—because mining is our responsibility, not the responsibility of the feds; because it is our responsibility, as it is the responsibility of the people of Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia to look after their own natural resources—let's have this conversation right here with our very competent Minister of Northern Development and Mines, not at the federal level.

Nothing else will change. We're not creating something that doesn't already exist. We're just saying that given that those are our natural resources, we want to have this conversations with the provincial government, which may be a whole lot more of a willing partner to make sure that the ore is processed here, because we have a stake in this. We have a stake in making sure that our ores are processed, milled, smelted and all the rest of it in Ontario. Maybe, as my colleague from Timmins—James Bay said, we will put offers on the table that our federal cousin is not interested in but that we are, because it is our natural resources and because it is our responsibility. This is a one-word bill. It's not going to change the world; it's going to create jobs in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for debate. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Minister of Northern Development and Mines for having stayed for the entire debate. I really enjoyed your views and your comments, along with the members from Parry Sound—Muskoka, Kenora—Rainy River, Eglinton—Lawrence, Nipissing, Timmins—James Bay—thank you for your tireless efforts on this particular issue—Chatham—Kent—Essex, Timiskaming—Cochrane—just an amazing summary of what this bill actually is—and the member from Nickel Belt—you just hit it right on the head.

It is something as simple as that; I have to say it is. We need to take the appropriate actions. We need to empower ourselves. I was really disappointed when I heard “protectionist” and a really dramatic statement of how this is going to hurt us. It's going to empower us. It's going to force us to look at what we have in our own backyard. It's going to tell us that, “Wait a second; we have an opportunity here.” Why aren't we looking at the infrastructure that we have here? Why aren't we challenging our own policy-makers and our bureaucrats to come up with the ideas that we need to develop those resources? First and foremost, why aren't we making that decision? It's mind-boggling for me to stand here and say, why wouldn't you want that responsibility? Why wouldn't you want to have that opportunity to make that decision?

1440

Again, I started with this: This is not building walls around the province. This is not restricting flow to come in or flow to go out. This is empowering the minister in

order to justify a decision that rightfully has to be made with the resources of Ontario, responsible for Ontarians. This is what this is, and we should move on it. I implore everybody to support this bill. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the debate on ballot item 13.

OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT ACT (CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'OMBUDSMAN (SOCIÉTÉS D'AIDE À L'ENFANCE)

Miss Taylor moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act with respect to children's aid societies / *Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman en ce qui a trait aux sociétés d'aide à l'enfance.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order number 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I rise to speak on an issue that has been before us many times. Over the years, it has been the subject of Bill 88, Bill 93, Bill 130, Bill 131, Bill 183, Bill 110, and now before us as Bill 42. This request to amend the Ombudsman Act has seen many variations, but today we will speak directly to the children's aid societies.

I know the importance of the amendment to the act for other sectors, but as the critic for children and youth services, I chose to focus directly on the CAS portion. There can be no doubt, with the amount of times that this amendment has been before us since 2005, and the public outcry for this allowance, that it is time for this House to move forward, hear the people of this province and pass this bill.

The children's aid societies play one of the most critical roles in our province. Their mandate is to care for our most precious and sometimes our most vulnerable assets: our children. Through the Child and Family Services Act, they are charged with the responsibility to ensure the well-being and safety of our children. Under that act, they must investigate allegations that children may be in need of protection. They must provide protection where necessary. They must provide guidance, counselling and other services. They must provide care.

With this huge responsibility has come an empire of extraordinary powers. They have the power and the ability to act first and ask questions later. In some cases, that's exactly what needs to be done, but in other cases it's questionable. Mistakes can be made, mistakes that have devastating consequences to children and their families. Mr. Speaker, in a child's life there's no turning back the clock.

There can be no doubt about the difficult job performed by many dedicated professionals, and those who are doing a good job can only benefit from the protection

of independent investigation. I have met many great people who work hard and are working in the best interest of children and families. But I have also heard stories from families and former children in care who have felt threatened, bullied, harassed and coerced by children's aid societies.

Through the transformation agenda, the focus was to shift from children in care to keeping children in families and providing services to ensure healthy outcomes. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, the hundreds of people that I have heard from have felt that this has not been the case. When issues are brought to my attention, it is often because their rights as parents have felt threatened with custody or less access, or they're already jumping through so many hoops. I have met mothers who have left their spouses and their homes because they are being told that they are okay but their spouses are not, only then to be told that the story has changed and that's not going to happen. I have met other mothers who have completely cleaned up their lives with the assistance of the CAS, only to not have their children returned. They are left with nothing but a carrot dangling in front of their face for the next hoop.

Just in the past month, we heard yet again of a very questionable decision regarding the placement of a young girl. This child was placed in a home of a man who repeatedly abused her, both sexually and physically, until she was able to escape at the age of 15. She had been removed from that home at the age of six, after reports of prostitutes and drug use in the home, only to be sent back. Her own file that she read at the age of 17 said that there were flags of concern from babysitters and others of sexual abuse at the age of 7. How could we have made this decision? How could we have failed this child?

After this story, another woman contacted me stating that she too had suffered similar situations, now to only find herself with an open case file for her own children. The CAS's concern was that she may have issues later in life due to the trauma that she suffered as a child. Trust me when I tell you this woman is a survivor and she is a respected member of our community, yet this is what she's facing.

The visitors in the gallery here today are people who have been fighting this battle for so many years, some of them probably a lifetime. I would really like to thank them for their participation and hard work in encouraging families to contact their MPPs in support of Bill 42. Thank you. No one is arguing that sometimes a child has to be removed from a home. In the best interests of a child, sometimes that's the only possible outcome. But when that happens, we need to get it right; we need to make sure that we are doing what is best for the child and fair for their families.

So we have talked about experiences of individuals. Now let's talk about the processes and the procedures that people find impossible to navigate. I'll start with the Child and Family Services Review Board. Yes, this is an option if it is a procedural issue. Only those seeking and receiving CAS services can register a complaint. The

board cannot hear from grandparents or other concerned family members. They cannot hear serious issues of conduct, policies or practices. They cannot investigate allegations of abuse or neglect. The only resolution is to have the CAS respond or provide reason. If you've seen the paperwork that goes with this process, it's very complicated and confusing for many.

Other forms of oversight: the family courts—not a very user-friendly environment. It's very time consuming and very costly.

The coroner's office and the Pediatric Death Review Committee—obviously, both play a very crucial role, and their work is greatly valued. But by definition, they only get involved once the ultimate price has been paid. Then it's too late.

I recently received a response from the minister to the hundreds of petitions that have been submitted to this House. In that letter, she stated that the CAS was accountable to the community in which it served, which has been another question that has been brought to my attention: "How do I get on this committee? Where are the postings saying where and when this committee sits?"

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Just last week I heard from a lawyer who wanted to complain about the abuse that a young client had been receiving from a children's aid society, and was told by the society that the complaint process was only open to direct clients of the society. So, Mr. Speaker, if a trained lawyer—and she is not alone—is so frustrated about having to deal with a complaint, what hope is there for families who are already at their wits' end trying to deal with this system?

By giving the Ombudsman the capacity to oversee children's aid societies, we get the broad and general authority and respect that comes with that office. We get skilled investigators and achieve an ability to receive analysis of the problems.

The most recent figures from the Ombudsman are absolutely overwhelming. In the last 11 months, it's 415 complaints. Over the last eight years, it's 4,000 complaints registered with his office. But of course, he can do nothing about it. Clearly, despite the mechanisms that are in place, there is a serious gap when it comes to accountability and oversight.

Ontario is the only province that does not allow their Ombudsman to oversee the child protection services. BC, Alberta, Yukon, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador have all recognized the wisdom of giving their Ombudsman the responsibility to oversee their child protection services, but not Ontario, and perhaps that is because of an accident of history. Children's aid societies were set up as private institutions, but in 2013 Ontario's children's aids are funded to the tune of \$1.5 billion by the Ontario government. They're governed by the Child and Family Services Act. They act on behalf of the government. The government must hold them accountable to an independent body.

In the previous session, before prorogation, Bill 110 passed second reading. I'm hopeful that the new Premier

and the new minister will still find value and pass this bill. It is my hope, as well as thousands of families across this province, that this bill not only pass second reading but that this bill be moved through committee, be brought back to this House for third reading and receive royal assent.

Having an independent, arm's-length body protecting our children should not be a question any longer. We have heard way too many stories of horrific situations that just should not have happened and could have been prevented. I urge every member of this House: Please listen to the voices of the people who sent you here and pass this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the House again to talk about this bill. I believe I did so the last time this bill was before us, and I do want to acknowledge the member for her hard work on this issue. As she knows, I'm the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and I want to be very, very clear that our government shares concerns whenever it includes the safety and well-being of children in Ontario. Our most vulnerable children are of the utmost importance to our government, Speaker.

I don't just say that as an MPP. I don't just say that as a parliamentary assistant to the ministry of children and youth, a former PA to that ministry, but I am someone who has followed the work of CASs closely, and I am a mother. I'm very involved in my community and know about the work of children's aid societies, and I know how this kind of work is governed in our province. So I just want to spend a few minutes, if I may, talking about the setup in Ontario.

I am going to be sharing my time with the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, as well as the member from Mississauga-Brampton South.

I'm very happy to speak on behalf of the government on this. The one thing that is very, very important for everybody to understand is that in Ontario we have a system that is different and unique, and structurally completely different than the other provinces that the member from Hamilton Mountain speaks about.

Children's aid societies are not run centrally by our province here, as I'm sure she knows. They are run by independent, community-based and, I would add, legal entities.

I'm not sure—this is the question, because I'm not sure—if the member is suggesting that CASs in Ontario be brought into the Ontario government the way they are in the other ministries she cited. That's something I'm interested in understanding a bit more, if that's how she sees this going, because structurally, it is quite different.

There are other oversight mechanisms in Ontario. First of all, I talked about the board and their accountabilities and legal obligations to allow for cases to be dealt with in a manner that is sensitive and responsive to local context.

It is important that local CASs provide local context, but that does not free them from compliance requirements from Ministry of Children and Youth Services standards.

When a child comes into contact with the CAS, our foremost goal is to ensure safety of the child, and I think everyone can agree with that. There are steps our government has taken to improve oversight, and I won't get into too many details about that because I will be sharing my time with the other members.

But I want to acknowledge that children's aid societies are mandated to have an internal review complaint process. It must be timely and transparent. If that doesn't yield the desired result, we have the Child and Family Services Review Board, an independent third party that has an understanding of the sector and can look into any complaints. Since 2008, we've expanded those powers of the CFSRB. The board provides alternative dispute resolution services to help bring opposing parties together to resolve cases in children's best interests, and it's accountable for its decisions.

In fact, the Ombudsman already has the authority to investigate complaints about the board and issue recommendations, so there is a current role for the Ombudsman in Ontario.

I just want to mention a couple of other things. Our government established the independent Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, who provides an independent voice. And, of course, there's support, Speaker. There's the Auditor General, the coroner's office and there are other bodies involved. In 2006, the government implemented a differential response approach to deal with the different types and severity of child maltreatment.

I want to summarize by saying there are many, many review mechanisms in place:

- (1) the internal review I spoke of;
- (2) the specialized independent review board;
- (3) Ombudsman oversight of the board;
- (4) if a case goes before the court, the children's lawyer providing input and advice; and
- (5) the Auditor General and the coroner also serve oversight functions.

Could some of these things be better? Perhaps, Speaker, perhaps. I think we can have some good conversations about that; I think we can. But let's recognize that Ontario has a completely different structure, and we need to look carefully about any future changes.

I'll end on that so I can allow sufficient time for my colleagues to speak, and thank you for the time, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: As PC critic for children and youth, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill 42, Ombudsman Amendment Act (Children's Aid Societies). I'd like to commend the member from Hamilton Mountain for bringing the legislation forward once again.

Bill 42 would give the Ontario Ombudsman authority to investigate and report on complaints to our children's aid societies. The Ombudsman has been asking for this

authority for some time, and in light of the critical work that children's aid societies do, his request seems entirely reasonable.

We know Ontario's children's aid societies are doing tough work under less-than-ideal circumstances. In Peel and Windsor-Essex recently, we've seen the impact that provincial budget pressures can have.

We also know that this government likes selective transparency and that its ministers are somewhat totally oblivious to what's going on in the ministries.

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Now, more than ever, we in the Legislature need to ensure that the public has a higher level of trust in the system, and that we are doing everything in our power to make sure that all our children have the best possible shot at a happy, healthy life. Our children's well-being should be a non-partisan concern; it's that simple. The Ombudsman's office has powerful tools to investigate and report on complaints. He can identify the systemic problems that may be at the root of those complaints.

Right now, complaints against children's aid societies are dealt with by applying to the Child and Family Services Review Board. The board's annual report tells us that during 2010-11, they received 246 applications to have complaints about children's aid society decisions reviewed. In the same year, 17 cases were heard, and in 11 of those orders were made in favour of the applicant. So there was a problem with the original children's aid society decisions in well over half the cases reviewed.

In 2010-11, there were also 229 open cases of kids improperly placed or unfairly removed from their families that have complaints about their current situation. That's 229 cases waiting to be heard.

Bill 42 isn't going to remove the need for children's aid societies. It isn't going to make the complaints go away. What it will do is provide us with an objective investigator who will boost transparency and accountability. I am happy to support Bill 42, and I look forward to hopefully moving this along to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's an honour to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 42, brought forward by my colleague from Hamilton Mountain. I want to commend her on bringing this forward, as she did before.

This bill, if passed, will allow the province's Ombudsman to investigate decisions and recommendations made by children's aid societies. Ombudsman oversight of children's aid societies is a major concern all across the province, and has been for years. Since being elected, I have spoken to many individuals who have had difficult experiences with children's aid societies and who have felt there was nowhere else to turn for help. This is an issue people on both sides are very passionate about. We're talking about decisions that are being made that impact entire families, and making the wrong decision can have permanent negative impacts.

But I want to be clear: I don't believe that by supporting this bill we're demonizing children's aid societies. I

believe there is overall recognition among everyone here, and even the families who are calling for this oversight, that the work children's aid societies do is invaluable. The people who work for these organizations are professional and caring individuals who do their best to make the right decisions. Most of the time, those decisions are right, but sometimes they are wrong, and sometimes the decisions can be right at the time but circumstances change, and this is an extremely difficult system to navigate for people who are caught up in it.

In my professional career, I have seen families torn apart. I've seen the grief of family members who have had a relative taken away from them, never to be seen again. I've worked with parents who have battled substance abuse problems but have cleaned up their own lives and are ready to move forward, but are not being allowed to see their children. I've seen the scars inflicted on many First Nations people who have had a family member taken away or who have been taken away themselves. We need to do everything in our power to ensure that people aren't taken away from their homes unnecessarily and, if they are, that there is recourse for those who are affected.

Each and every one of these people has a different story to tell. They are rarely alike, but the one thing that is the same in all these cases is that these individuals feel helpless, they feel frustrated and they feel as though they are facing an uphill battle in a very complex system that is very difficult to navigate.

What we're saying today is, let's give them a little more clarity; let's give them a process that each and every province, with the exception of Ontario, has in place; let's add some balance to the system, one more check to ensure that the right decisions are being made and that these families have a place to turn when they need it most.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I am pleased to rise today and speak on Bill 42, and I appreciate the work being done by the member from Hamilton Mountain.

We have to understand, what is this bill about? This bill is about amending the Ombudsman Act so that he can have more powers to investigate the children's aid societies. But at the same time it's very important to recognize that the children's aid societies are accountable not only to the government but also the communities they serve. And let's be clear that the structure of the children's aid societies here in the province of Ontario is completely different from other provinces in Canada where the child protection is operated directly by the government. Here, children's aid societies are community-based, non-profit organizations with independent boards, and our government funds and monitors them as a part of our commitment to support the well-being and the protection of our children.

The children's aid societies are already under the oversight of our court system. If children's aid societies believe that a child needs protection, they have to appear

before the judge to show just cause. And if someone has concerns or problems, they can always discuss them with the children's aid worker, their supervisors and their program managers.

The Child and Family Services Act requires that all children's aid societies in the province of Ontario have an independent complaints review procedure, which is there, Mr. Speaker. Next, a person can apply for a review to the Child and Family Services Review Board. If the person is not satisfied, they can seek a judicial review. If still they are dissatisfied, they can always file a complaint with the Ombudsman's office in the province of Ontario.

So that oversight is already in process, Mr. Speaker. The opposition's rhetoric about accountability is empty rhetoric, and Ontario has a unique child protection model.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: First of all, I'd like to recognize some people in the audience today who have made their lives involved in this situation: Darlene Sine, Nadia Fordham, Joanne Cormier, Kenneth Reid, Curtis Kingston and Samantha Paulin. These people find themselves engaged in the system, amongst many others whom I've heard from, and have not found satisfaction.

I would also say, in opening, I want to respect the work done by Durham Children's Aid Society and the volunteers. I believe, in fact, they all try to do their very best. But there's no organization that should be exempted from oversight and qualifications. We see that every day in the House, whether it's on eHealth or other issues that are before us. Dozens of emails I have heard from are calling for this Ombudsman oversight, and I support the member from Hamilton Mountain and her passion. Miss Taylor, I take great pride in saying I support your bill.

I also agree that there must always be an appeal process, and in fact there really is. But just how effective is the Child and Family Services Review Board or the very expensive Family Court process or the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth? These do not seem to have solved the problem, and they're the institutions of appeal today. Unfortunately, families often find there's no place for them to turn if they feel the CAS has acted inappropriately or is in error or must address some other pressing concern.

Let me share with you very briefly, in the time I have, from two cases in my riding of Durham. Of course, out of respect for confidentiality, I will not provide any names.

In one case, a very young child was abruptly taken from a classroom and interviewed by two CAS workers for almost an hour without any notification at all to the parents. The child was traumatized. Apparently, this was the result of an anonymous complaint to the children's aid. The parents were never given any clear details of who made the accusation and particularly why. The parents were not able to ascertain the qualifications of the interviewers. It is their understanding that the interviewers did not have the credentials of social workers who would be trained to work with a child in that setting.

The interview and investigation revealed no grounds for concerns about the well-being of the child, but when the parents asked for accountability and an explanation, there was nothing in place or a forum for them to be heard. Parents and family members need to be assured that they are not alone when they raise concerns or complaints. They really feel victimized.

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I'd also like to briefly mention one other situation some of you may be familiar with. An individual who presented himself as a fully qualified psychologist and worked with Durham Children's Aid for a number of years on contract was later proven to lack the credentials of a clinical psychologist. In fact, the psychologist was registered with the Ontario College of Psychologists as a psychological associate. As such, the limitations of his practice prevented him from making independent diagnoses, which he did. The lack of credentials as a psychologist was discovered when a family member involved in a custody case found out through their own personal investigation.

Mr. Speaker, individuals shouldn't have to conduct their own investigations, and that's why we're calling for the Ombudsman. Investigation is one area in which the Ombudsman excels in. An investigation process should be followed by the Ombudsman in a thorough and professional manner dedicated to the discovery of facts. Opening actions, decisions and recommendations of the children's aid to the scrutiny of the Ombudsman I believe—this is important—will assist the CAS in achieving to be more effective, more trusted and, most importantly, respected.

I support this bill because it will benefit not only children and families in Ontario, but also the children's aid themselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: C'est un peu décevant d'entendre les membres du Parti libéral nous dire que les mesures en place fonctionnent et qu'on n'a besoin de rien d'autre. Si les mesures en place fonctionnaient, pourquoi est-ce qu'il y a 4 000 Ontariens et Ontariennes qui ont communiqué avec le bureau de l'ombudsman? Pourquoi est-ce qu'il y a tant d'Ontariens et d'Ontariennes qui sont tellement désespérés que, même après avoir utilisé tous les mécanismes qui sont déjà là, ils se tournent vers l'ombudsman parce que ça ne marche pas? Pourquoi ne pas donner aux Ontariens et Ontariennes ce qu'ils veulent? Ils veulent être capables de téléphoner à l'ombudsman, de savoir qu'il va faire une investigation et qu'il va leur donner des réponses. C'est tout ce qu'on demande—c'est tout ce qu'on demande.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is an issue in my life and my family's life that is very important. I was a foster child; I was adopted. I've been a ward of a province, a provincial government. My children were crown wards before I raised them, and I've served on the board of a child and family service agency.

I cannot support this bill. As a matter of fact, I think it's one of the most wrong-headed pieces of legislation presented in this House in a long time. The member from Nickel Belt talks about 4,000 parents waiting for that. Walk out two blocks over here—I spent 10 years of my life working on the street—and count the hundreds and thousands and thousands—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Did I interrupt you? I did not interrupt you. I listened very carefully, and we can hopefully have respectful debate on something this sensitive.

There are thousands of children on the streets of downtown Winnipeg who have been raped, sexually abused and beaten, and they're not crown wards, and they have secrets. Having been someone who for 10 years worked in a community health centre, who had more children disclose to me abuse at home in nice, middle-class suburban houses with parents who were executives, and the kinds of stories I carried around through all of that, of the children that I would look—and they knew no one would believe them. Their parents were powerful.

We always think that child abuse comes from someone in a white van or some criminal in jail or somebody. The sad reality is that 80% or 90% of children that are raped, sexually abused and physically abused never get there, and they're abused and raped by people who are powerful. The first thing the children who disclosed to me used to say was, "Please do not tell my parents."

Trying to find a safe place for children is critically important. My mother was 16. She struggled in poverty. She decided, after giving me away on conditions and then getting me back, that she just could not support me. But a lot of my friends who went through that and a lot of kids that I fostered had horrible, horrible stories. To me right now, Mr. Speaker, the weight and the risks are on protecting children before anything.

The CAS ICRP program: If the member was proposing reforms or to strengthen the internal review, I would roll up my sleeves and work with her on that. To me—I only have a minute, sadly—any kind of review or further review of child and family services should be by someone who has the qualities of an office that is mediative, discreet, values prudence and sensitivity, shows respect and the ability to work to resolution. The Ombudsman is someone who is on the front page of the paper, whose tactics are to advocate for an individual, and hardly an office that shows that kind of discretion.

When this came forward, I had many young people—because I do mentoring right now at Covenant House—who came to me and said, "I know about the Ombudsman. This is not the kind of officer that I'd want out there." They need a place where they know the stuff isn't going to be in the media, even if it doesn't involve their name.

The Family Court is expensive, but it should be. This should not be easy. I can't imagine there wouldn't be complaints. Can you think of anything more difficult this government does than try to protect children? Often they

have to protect them from their parents. Can you think of a dynamic that wouldn't generate complaints? Can you think of a more difficult thing?

This is a simplistic answer to a complex problem, and it's simply wrong.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It is my pleasure to stand in support of this bill. Bill 42 is the seventh attempt to give Ontario's Ombudsman investigative power over the province's 47 children's aid societies. It is a good bill and should be supported by all.

The Ombudsman is an officer of the Legislature who is independent of government and political parties. The Ombudsman's job is to ensure government accountability through effective oversight of the administration of government services. He responds to complaints from the public, with the help of 80 staff members. Members of the public have been complaining to the Ombudsman for years about the children's aid societies, but his office has never had the power to investigate these complaints. His hands have been tied. Let's untie them for the benefit of children and families.

If a child is in distress due to physical or mental abuse, that child's safety and best interests must be our first priority. The rights of parents must be properly upheld as well. We cannot continue to ignore the mistakes and bad decisions arising from the activities of the children's aid societies.

Right now, complaints are resolved through the Child and Family Services Review Board, which is ineffective, biased and backlogged. Urgent, unbiased investigation of complaints is particularly important when it deals with a child and their family. Mistakes can last a lifetime. Increased oversight should always be promoted. Increased oversight leads to more efficient service delivery, which leads to cost savings.

The Ombudsman has the power to identify how our government services are actually working for Ontarians, and when those services are not working, he has the power to outline a path to make them work. In my opinion, the Ombudsman should have the ability to look into any service delivered or mandated by the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I support this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate the member from Hamilton Mountain for her tenacity. I also want to congratulate the people who come to support these bills each and every time that we have presented them, for the last seven years. They are, in my mind, the real heroes behind this, because they come from all over the province—all over.

It speaks to the tragic incidents that they have had to survive over the years and the passion they feel to seek some justice and to seek someone who can help them, someone to whom they can go when there is a problem. At the moment, they have no one to go to.

These bills are not an attack on children's aid societies, these bills have not been an attack on the government, yet when I hear the Liberal members speak with timidity and such defensiveness about it, one wonders how we can hold back from criticizing them, because I do not accept the arguments you make that we have a unique system, and I do not accept the arguments from the Minister of Transportation, who said this is a simple answer to a complex problem. I do not accept that. And I don't accept the argument from the member from Mississauga-Brampton South when she says this is empty rhetoric. It blows my mind when I hear those arguments. I understand the Minister of Transportation is making different arguments that are valid, but it does not take away one ounce from this bill—not one ounce.

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Every Ombudsman across this country has this power, and not just oversight over children's aid societies but oversight over many other areas.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Hospitals.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hospitals included—but not this government.

It speaks to some timidity and fear, and I wonder why. This is about not just transparency and clarity, but it's about accountability, and it's about giving people who have suffered some form of abuse a place to go to, to register a complaint and to then seek some solution to that problem. It's not just about an individual problem; it's about systemic problems that exist in the system. It's about investigating them and speaking to solutions. That's what this does.

There appears to be tremendous fear of this Ombudsman. When the Minister of Transportation says that this man is about front-page news, that may be, because what he uncovers is about strong issues that attract the media to it. This is not about André Marin; it's about the work that he does and the problems he exposes and the recommendations he makes to governments in particular, and parliamentarians in general, to fix them. That's really the point that we're talking about.

When various members, including the minister of consumer affairs, talk about there being other mechanisms—she is not the only one who has made this argument. Other members have made the argument historically here. There are many other areas of supervision around this issue and/or oversight. The fact of the matter is that they are not working. Neither the independent provincial child advocate, who is a good person, neither the child and family services review act, nor the courts—none of these places have the power that the Ombudsman has to be able to subpoena people and do an adequate investigation of a particular problem, no matter where that is. That's all we're asking the ombudsperson to do.

I don't understand why we oppose it, except that we are afraid of him, it seems, but more importantly, we are afraid of the things that he would uncover. I say to you, why would we be afraid? The arguments we have made traditionally, historically in this House are that we should allow this person the power to be able to go investigate

individual cases and systemic issues, and bring back recommendations.

The argument I've made to the previous Premier is, take charge and be a leader and say, "I want to know what problems exist in the CAS, because if there are problems that are unresolved, I want to know, and I want to fix them." That's what leadership is about. Yet each and every time that we present a bill in this House, we have members who find different arguments to oppose it.

The fact that this is a unique thing in Canada is irrelevant in the scheme of things. It doesn't preclude having an Ombudsman having the power to go in and investigate. It does not. They're not related. Whether it's unique or not unique, giving this person the power to go in and do an investigation is something that we should welcome as parliamentarians, not hide and run away from, because what you do in making those kinds of arguments is to say, "We are afraid of what that person may uncover because his solutions may put us on the defensive." But if you lead as ministers and as a Premier in this discussion, people will thank you. They will thank you. There is nothing at all to fear in this—nothing whatsoever.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And I'm not sure, Minister, what you're saying because I can't hear you, but I don't accept your arguments. I don't accept any of the arguments the members have made. They're too defensive, and you're all afraid, it appears. It appears most of the arguments are almost against the Ombudsman, which is very, very puzzling. I understand that some of you are upset about many of the recommendations he has made with respect to many of the investigations he has brought forth to you. I could understand that, and I do. But if you want to lead this debate, then what you should be doing is saying, "We accept that there are many oversight bodies, but there is not anybody that has these investigative powers the Ombudsman has. We want to be able to give him that power to go search out what the problems are and recommend to us what we could do."

I recommend this bill. I commend the member from Hamilton Mountain for bringing this bill forward. I hope that some of the Liberal members will change their minds and support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand and speak to this bill. I think it's certainly a subject that requires discussion and consideration. Any time we have a bill that comes forward or any discussion that talks about increased oversight or increased accountability on the government, I think that's a good thing.

The fact remains that the CAS receives the vast majority of its funding through the provincial government, through the taxpayers of Ontario. For the taxpayers of Ontario to ask for and receive oversight over such financed bodies I think is fairly legitimate.

Having said that, I think that what we really need to do is look at the core of the problem here. The core of the

issue is that some CASs in Ontario—not all of them—have issues. Many of them will admit that they have issues that need to be resolved. Is the Ombudsman the best way to go about resolving all of these issues? Maybe not. Maybe there's a whole bunch of other different things we need to do. I think we really need to be touching the core of these issues so we're actually making sure CASs are doing what they're supposed to be doing and helping individual children.

I have a unique perspective on this. I know several children that have grown up through foster care. I know what they can achieve if they get the right sort of care and they're cared for as a ward of the state. It can happen. They can have success. There are successful children out there that have had a really good experience with a CAS. There are lots that haven't. There are lots of families that have suffered because of some of the actions of a CAS.

Is the Ombudsman the right way to go about it? I'm not sure. Is it a step in the right direction? I would say yes.

I think the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure had some really good points. There are some children that will have issues that they can't and shouldn't feel safe to go to an Ombudsman to put on front page of the Toronto Star. That's not the right angle to take. If we really want to look at helping the individual kids that are at the CASs, then we need to look at further fixes for CASs.

I think it's a little disingenuous for any members to suggest that all the arguments should be discounted in this. That's patently unfair to say. I think it's safe to say that children need to be looked at first. We need to make sure that our children are safe in our communities and that they're safe in the homes that they live in, whether they're foster homes or homes with their own biological parents. The number one thing here is that children need to be safe.

The Ombudsman is not the catch-all for any issue, and we've got to stop talking about that. Every time there's a problem in government: Go to the Ombudsman. Guys, that's part of our job over here: to bring awareness of government, to actually have oversight over the government. They expect that from us. The people expect that from us. That's what we get paid for. Let's do our jobs better, and we may not have to go to the Ombudsman for every little thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member for Hamilton Mountain, you have two minutes and a couple of seconds for a response.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members who spoke in favour of this bill.

I'm sorry to hear of the members who spoke against this bill, especially when some of those members whom I ran into at an event told me that, "If I win leadership, I will bring your bill and make it law." Today the wheel has spun again. So it's interesting, to say the least, but I guess I can't be that shocked.

Today I'm joined by families across Ontario. I'm joined by children who are now adults who have been through the system. The Ombudsman himself has been calling out for this for years—and not just our current Ombudsman, who we all know is very vocal, but for Ombudsmen going back as far as when they were first started, in 1979. They felt that their mandate should be expanded to all provincially funded organizations.

1530

The child protection services in our province are funded by the Ontario government to the tune of \$1.5 billion. We need to ensure that we are getting it right. I agree with the member, where he's not the be-all and end-all catch-all. That's not his place. That's not the place and the role that he wants to play, but when an investigation is needed, he has the tools and the abilities to do that investigation. He has the ability to bring it back to us in an analysis form and say, "This is what went wrong, and this is what we need to fix." That is the key to having the Ombudsman have the oversight of the children's aid.

I know very well that there are good people who are working in the system. Like I have said over and over and over again, it is not an attack on the good people who are doing a good job, because they will also benefit from this investigation. But when we have children who have suffered abuse and are being sent back to the exact same home—back to that abuser, who not just physically but sexually assaulted this child from the age of two until the age of 15, with concerns and concerns and concerns over the years—there's got to be an answer. So I—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I just realized that the time didn't—yes. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll vote on the item at the end of regular business.

PUBLIC SECTOR CAPACITY TO PAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA CAPACITÉ DE PAYER DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr. Wilson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to deal with arbitration in the public sector / Projet de loi 44, Loi traitant de l'arbitrage dans le secteur public.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I am delighted to rise in the House today to debate my private member's bill. The short title of the bill, actually, is Public Sector Capacity to Pay Act, 2013; most people just refer to it as the capacity to pay act.

If this bill is passed into law, it would amend 11 separate acts dealing with interest-based arbitration in the

broader public sector. I am honoured to say that numerous stakeholders were engaged at almost every major drafting stage to provide feedback and give advice, to ensure that we captured the crux of the needed changes in Ontario's broken arbitration system. Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus, along with many of our stakeholders, believe that the time has come to modernize public sector interest arbitration in Ontario.

The capacity to pay act before you today is one of the most comprehensive private member's bills that I have ever undertaken. Unlike the Liberals, who just retable their government legislation that they killed with prorogation, without considering input from others—and I'm thinking of the ambulance act, Bill 11—the capacity to pay act is an evolution of my Ability to Pay Act that I tabled in the last session. Working alongside our stakeholders—

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Guys, this stuff, actually, is pretty dry.

Working alongside our stakeholders, we ensured that this bill incorporated feedback and innovations suggested by engaged stakeholders, while also holding true to the 13 recommendations made by Don Drummond.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to tell you that the core elements of the capacity to pay act include:

- a newly created roster of qualified, pre-approved arbitrators;

- a fair and impartial process to appoint those arbitrators;

- an elimination of boards of arbitration and a move towards a simpler single-arbitrator model;

- a new legal requirement for pre-arbitration hearings, along with full disclosure by both management and employees on all issues;

- a new, detailed and revised set of unbiased economic criteria that arbitrators must use to consider the capacity of a community, or the province, to pay for a decision; and

- a specific legal clause for arbitration decisions to be based upon a no-tax-increase assumption, which is a huge departure from what we have today.

This act also dramatically shortens the time lines that arbitrators have to make a decision. They're limited to no more than nine months from the time an arbitrator is appointed. In the past, workers and employers had to literally wait for years to have a decision on an arbitration process. That was years without a raise for employees, in many cases. That was years in which employers, in many cases municipalities, were unable to budget appropriately. And it meant years for taxpayers to find out what could potentially be massive tax increases to pay for decisions that were delayed. I think of the case of the township of Scugog. Recently, their firefighters were awarded 26.7%, I believe, backdated four years—that's six firefighters. It caused an automatic increase of 2% in property taxes and the elected officials, the elected municipal councillors, had no say in that whatsoever—all caused by an arbitrator out of control.

Another major innovation in the capacity to pay act is the requirement for arbitrators to issue mandatory written reasons when they render a decision. It is not uncommon that massive arbitration decisions cost ratepayers, taxpayers, millions and millions of dollars, and it's a two-page decision. The first page is the covering page, and the second page has two paragraphs saying, "Here's my decision." No rationale whatsoever is required under the current law. It will be required under this law.

I want to go back to the issue of creating a qualified list of pre-approved arbitrators. This was a core recommendation of the McGuinty-Wynne government's own report issued by Don Drummond. Our act would create a cabinet regulation and set high standards and qualification for someone to be named to this list.

Of course, while the PC caucus always prefers that parties reach an agreement to labour disputes or contract negotiations through collective bargaining, in the event of an arbitration dispute, this act will empower the Minister of Labour to present a list of available arbitrators drawn from the roster to help the parties reach a resolution.

Also unique in this bill is a special process that allows parties to jointly propose a special arbitrator based upon a request to, and approval of, the minister. This particular provision is the result of feedback and input from stakeholders, so that they could nominate their own special arbitrator in unique circumstances.

Also, I'm proud to announce that the capacity to pay act contains another key innovation based upon stakeholder feedback, which is the new requirement that arbitrators convene pre-arbitration conferences. These pre-arbitration conferences are akin to pretrial hearings in court. This innovation will not only reduce the time spent by lawyers arguing a hearing, but will reduce the costs for all involved, and ultimately the taxpayer.

The pre-arbitration conferences will ensure that all the issues are on the table and all the parties engage in the fair practice of full disclosure. This innovation is a major benefit to both employers and employees. Not only would it help the overall arbitration process run more smoothly; it will prevent either of the parties from gaming the system by delaying deliberations.

In addition to the pre-arbitration hearings, there's another safety valve in the act around delaying tactics. This is a new clause that prohibits new issues or presenting new evidence after the hearing or arbitration conference has ended. This is the same way courts of law work.

Another element of the bill is the namesake for the act, and that is the capacity-to-pay provisions. Contained in this act are new criteria for arbitrators to consider when undertaking hearings. The criteria are fair, objective and apply to both employers and employees in the municipal sector and in the broader public sector as a whole.

To highlight some of these criteria, I want to outline the following:

When an arbitrator looks at the arguments of the parties involved in arbitration, they will now by law have

to consider a series of tests, including the wages and conditions of employment of other people outside the bargaining unit. This is included to address fairness to other workers in the same organization, so that one group of workers aren't making a lot more money or getting better health benefits or better pensions than others in the same organization. So there has to be a consideration of that, which they don't have to do now—there aren't any criteria now.

A comparison of wages and conditions of persons working outside the public sector in the same municipality or geographic region, to address numerous reports—the most recent one, I think, is the Fraser Institute's—showing that in many cases public sector workers, including wages and benefits, are making 25% to 27% more than people doing the same job in the private sector. So we want arbitrators to take that into consideration because, you know, again, it's the taxpayer and the private sector that has to pay for all the bills of the public sector, and there needs to be fairness.

1540

Arbitrators will also now be required to measure against the consumer price index for Ontario, as published by Statistics Canada, and arbitrators will need to look at the overall decline or the improvement of the fiscal health of the municipalities relative to comparable municipalities in Ontario or the province as a whole.

For municipal employers, arbitrators will have to look at the total property tax assessment and weighted tax assessment per household as well as the actual tax revenues of a particular community—for example, Windsor, which isn't doing very well economically. Their police were recently awarded, I think it was, close to 9% over three years. That's 3% a year—just a little under that, I think it was. The economy isn't growing even at 1%, so they're getting over three times each year what the economy is doing.

Six hundred thousand men and women woke up this morning without a job, Mr. Speaker. We think there are another 400,000 Ontarians that don't show up in any statistics and aren't able to find a job, but they're not in a government program, they're not on UI. We can only guess, but the economists tell us there are probably another 400,000 people. Those people have to be taken into account as part of the criteria. It's not only local unemployment rates and employment rates, but also—you know, it may be anecdotal, but council may very well know that there's a whole pile of people in town that simply don't have a job and aren't showing up in the statistics. There's actually a clause in here for that, too.

In general, the arbitrator will need to look at the economic situation in Ontario as a whole and how that compares to the municipality to the extent that that has not been addressed in other areas. Additional job security of employees compared to the job security of others employed in the municipality in the public sector and outside the public sector will also be measured.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, the legislation will be the first of its kind to require arbitrators to look at other factors

when the employer is a system-wide or provincial employer, such as national, provincial and local employment rates; economic growth rates; personal income rates; comparisons between employees and others in the public and private sectors in similar jobs, as I said; inherent advantages in bargaining enjoyed by employees because there's a monopoly on services because the activities are not carried on for profit or for both reasons. We're talking mainly in terms of numbers: fire, police, paramedics, employees in the municipal sector, for example, that aren't allowed to strike—nurses in nursing homes, both publicly owned nursing homes, homes for the aged, and private nursing homes that may belong to OPSEU or something like that. Those are the types of people we're talking about. It affects hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people.

They have a right to collective bargaining, but if that process breaks down they go to arbitration. Unfortunately, what we've been finding in many cases is that a lot of people don't put a lot of effort anymore into the collective bargaining process because they know the arbitrator will give them a better deal than they're going to get if they negotiate. That has been the case. It has gotten out of whack. Again, we've had arbitrators say that they don't have to list any criteria. They don't have to consider any capacity or ability to pay of the employer, and we're seeing arbitration awards on average over the last three years of 3% a year. That's the average. I don't know how many friends I have, including my sister, who was telling me yesterday that she doesn't know if she has a job with Pfizer tomorrow. There are lots of people waking up every day without the job security, the health benefits, the pensions, folks, that these people have. Now all of that will have to be taken into consideration.

The good news, Mr. Speaker, is that I do believe that, in spite of this Liberal government, the economy will grow again. Tim Hudak's plan will grow this economy again and employees will see the norm which we had under previous Conservative governments. You got 2% wages every year, and that was considered fair because the economy grew and inflation was low, and we'll be back to those days. But this act needs to bring fairness now because we need to get our books in order in the province. Municipalities need to be able to plan, and taxpayers are tired of taking it in the gut every time an arbitrator walks into town. It's unfair. I ask all members to bring some fairness back to the system.

This is exactly what AMO wants. They've endorsed it. The Ontario police services boards have endorsed this. Eastern Ontario mayors have endorsed this. We had a meeting in London and St. Thomas, in Cambridge. All the mayors down there and deputy mayors endorsed this. I know that one of my other members, Mr. Harris, is going to talk about that later on this afternoon.

So we'd ask the government, come to your senses. It helps you. We're doing your dirty work. It helps you to get your books in order, and it helps your municipal partners do the right thing.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please. Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, what a difference a year makes. I remember a time when Conservatives and New Democrats got together and challenged the government and took down the government in regard to the issue of what they were trying to do with wage-based arbitration last spring. In the budget of last year the Liberal government came forward and said, "We are going to make changes to the wage-based arbitration system" that we as New Democrats thought were unfair. At the time, we had the Conservatives work with us in partnership, the coalition of New Democrats and Conservatives, to work against the Liberal government and to try to bring them to their senses and not move on this wage-based arbitration.

But something happened. Something between last year and this year has made it that the Tories are now back at it, and they want to undo all that great work that we did in that Conservative-NDP coalition last spring where we stopped the government from being able to move on wage-based arbitration.

I'll leave it to others to figure out why, but I do want to put on the record a couple of things. The first part is that wage-based arbitration is there for a reason. Police officers, firefighters and others who are deemed to be essential servants have the right to belong to a union and have the right to be able to bargain. But we've said to them, "You don't have the right to strike." We've made it illegal for those particular people to strike. The trade-off was, "Okay, we'll give you wage-based arbitration." In the wage-based arbitration act, it already says that the arbitrator must take into account the ability to pay when coming down to a settlement.

If you look at the settlements of the firefighters, for example, which I have looked at—I've sat down with local firefighters back home. Myself and Peter Osterberg and a few others looked at what the wage-based arbitration settlements were for the past while. There's a difference of 0.02% in the arbitrated settlements that were given by arbitrators than what was freely negotiated by private sector unions and others when you take the average. So when you take the average of private sector bargaining and public sector bargaining, and you look at what wage-based arbitration has given to firefighters, there's a 0.02% difference between the two.

So which crisis is this Tory converted coalition—they're not part of our coalition anymore, obviously. But I've got to ask, what is it that they're trying to do? I think this is just more of the same. These are our Conservative friends who have decided they want to create chaos in this province. They say, "Should we be elected as a government, we're going to make so many stupid changes that we're going to have this province in total chaos. We're going to say to the union sector, 'Hey, let's kick you guys in the teeth'"—so all of those guys are mad. Then they're going to go to firefighters, and they're going to go to police officers, and they're going to go to all of those people who used to be traditional Conservative supporters, who are becoming less so today, and

they're saying, "Let's create chaos over there." That doesn't make any sense. Quite frankly, what the Tories are trying to propose by way of this legislation and by way generally of what their white papers are doing doesn't make any sense.

I would argue that New Democrats are a more sensible choice when it comes to this issue because we're saying that you have to respect the right of workers in a democracy to belong to a union. That is something that we say is important in a democracy; workers should have that right. But if we're going to take away the right to strike, at least give those workers the ability to have wage-based arbitration. We're saying as New Democrats, we do not support this legislation, no more than we supported what the Liberals tried to do last fall. We will vote against this bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I begin with some sympathy for the issue that this private member's bill is intended to address. The status quo on interest arbitration is not fair to municipalities and it's not fair to taxpayers.

What we in Ontario wish to avoid or correct is a state in which the table is demonstrably tilted in favour of either party when engaged in collective bargaining. Right now, outcomes from arbitrated wage settlements show a trend that, if the labour side digs in its heels, arbitration awards favour labour and thus trigger tax hikes.

I would agree with the assertion that tax decisions properly belong in debate at the city or regional council table and not determined in secret by an unelected and unaccountable arbitrator. That said, the cure to an unbalanced status quo is not to tilt the tables the other way. It's to bring balance to collective bargaining in the municipal sector.

1550

Now to the problems with this bill. In recent years, the Ontario PCs have brought forth different bills with sharply different proposals to try and accomplish this objective. As with gas plant cancellations, they just don't know how to do it.

For the Ontario PCs—I'm going to echo the comments of my colleague from Timmins—James Bay—this is not about solving the problem. This is about pushing emotional hot buttons with a poorly thought-through legislative proposal.

As proposed in the bill, arbitration would, when everything else is stripped away, be reduced to an algorithm in which local variables are plugged in, and if the result is less than a certain threshold, it's okay, and if not, the arbitration award would either be invalidated or set aside. Not acceptable. It is this algorithmic nature of the proposal in Bill 44 that is in fact its Achilles heel. In the event that legislation like Bill 44 is ever enacted, it will almost certainly give rise to a court challenge on its validity, legality or constitutionality. Given the strong predetermined nature of the bill's proposal, it is very likely that legislation of this type would be struck down. The choice before this Legislature is to either vote this bill down here or see it struck down in the courts. The

only work that this bill will actually create will be of billable hours by lawyers.

Now there is a better way, and it is a way that the PC Party itself supported just 18 months ago. Last year, I chaired the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Our committee's signature work was the 2012-13 Ontario budget. Last April, May and June, the Ontario PC Party had an opportunity to largely enact a piece of their own 2011 election platform. The 2012-13 budget proposed a balanced and fair set of proposals that would have returned a level playing field to interest arbitration. In 2011, the PC Party sought tighter timelines on arbitration findings, and the 2012-13 budget proposed such timelines.

Now if you're watching out there, you may think, "Well, I send my MPPs to the Legislature to support good ideas." So if the Liberals and Conservatives agreed on the principle and on the result, then certainly the PC Party supported that part of the government's budget, and if you felt that way, you would be disappointed. The PC Party, and indeed all of the opposition majority, voted down those sections on interest arbitration.

They voted down a new legislative requirement for both parties in an interest arbitration proceeding to make written submissions—imminently reasonable—and to provide a requirement for the arbitrator to provide written reasons for an award. They voted against a reasonable timetable for issuing an arbitration award. They voted against reasonable and balanced provisions that would have benefited both sides in collective bargaining for ambulance services, fire protection, hospitals, provincial and municipal police and transit workers. We could have done better last year.

I do agree with the objectives of this bill, but the means it proposes to achieve its ends are both unworkable and legally unsupportable. I think as a House, we can do better and one of the ways to do better is to defeat this bill here this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to join in the debate this afternoon. Off the top, I just want to take a moment to commend the member for Simcoe-Grey. I'm not sure that anyone here understands the incredible amount of work that Mr. Wilson has put into this comprehensive arbitration bill. His efforts are reflected in the content of the bill, which is excellent and really gets to the heart of the problem that municipalities and other public sector employers have been dealing with for years. I think the true measure of its success, though, is the incredible amount of support that he has received to this bill. As was mentioned earlier this morning, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the association of police service boards and the OHA have all said to us that we've got it right with this bill.

As AMO president Russ Powers said right after Mr. Wilson's bill was introduced, "Municipal leaders with diverse political views support this bill. AMO hopes that members of the Legislature will work together, seize this opportunity and pass much-needed legislation."

Nothing sums up the difference between the McGuinty-Wynne government and the Ontario PC official opposition more clearly than the debate that we're having this afternoon. This government has known for many years that arbitration reform is a top priority of municipalities, and they've talked a lot about trying to change and do something. But when Dalton McGuinty gave us a four-month hiatus, this government obviously used it for a vacation. We here didn't take that time off. We worked with municipalities. We decided that taxpayers can't afford the out-of-control wage settlements being forced on them by arbitrators. So we spent four months consulting our stakeholders and listening to them. The result is the arbitration bill that we have in front of us today.

Ladies and gentlemen, I had an opportunity for a couple of days last week to spend some time with Mr. Wilson talking about this bill. We met with the mayor and deputy mayor of Ottawa, the Eastern Ontario Mayors' Committee in Prescott, and municipal leaders in the London area and also in Kitchener-Waterloo. The overwhelming reaction from everyone was that it was met with a sense of relief. Finally, regardless of political stripe, someone has put together a bill and crafted a bill to address this problem.

Ironically, the day after we met with Mayor Jim Watson and Deputy Mayor Eli El-Chantiry in Ottawa, an arbitrator awarded the city's police association retroactive pay hikes of nearly 6%. In response, the Ottawa Sun reported, "El-Chantiry said the decision gives even more reason why politicians should support a PC proposal on arbitration reform."

Just in my last few minutes, Speaker, I also want to take a moment to thank one of my local mayors, Prescott mayor Brett Todd, who is chair of the Eastern Ontario Mayors' Committee. It's the first time that Prescott has had that honour, to have a chair of that organization. Mr. Wilson and I met with eastern Ontario mayors last Thursday in the Prescott town hall. After listening to the presentation, he said this: "This is pretty much exactly what the EOMC was looking for in terms of interest arbitration reform that addresses the broken current system that has put our taxpayers on the hook for wildly escalating public sector salaries."

In closing, I want to say something to members opposite, from Ottawa, London, Windsor and everywhere else in between: Don't take my word for it, or Mr. Wilson's, when this bill is up for support; listen to your local mayors and councillors. This is the bill that they've been looking for. We've consulted them. We didn't take a holiday for four months when Dalton shuttered the Legislature. This is a bill that they want action from today. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Let's get to the point: This bill and the other bills that the Conservative Party has tabled in this Legislature this session—there are many of them—basically are an attack on collective bargaining, an attack on unions. That's what this is about. It's not

about standing up for cities; it's about attacking workers' rights. That's what it's about.

The Progressive Conservatives would have us become a right-to-work state. That's what they're after—those great states like Mississippi and Louisiana, where people are doing so well, and the economy is so strong, not like jurisdictions like Sweden, that has an 85% unionization rate, where there's virtually no poverty and no homelessness. No. They want to take us on a Hobbesian race to the bottom so that we don't have collective bargaining rights, which, by the way, Mr. Speaker, are simple democratic rights. So not only are they attacking workers' and collective bargaining rights and unions; they are attacking civil rights and democracy. No less than Martin Luther King talked about right-to-work laws and attacks on unions as an attack on basic civil rights and democracy—and that was back in the 1960s.

1600

Let us make no mistake: Without unions and collective bargaining, we wouldn't have a five-day week, we wouldn't have a middle class; we would have child labour—I'm waiting for that bill to come forward. We certainly would not have the economy we enjoy today, and we would not have the economies we see that are doing so well that are grounded on civil rights, democracy and collective bargaining.

And I'm sad to say that they have found, at times, a willing partner in the Liberal Party across the aisle. With Bill 115, which was an attack on teachers' right to collectively bargain, they were the new coalition, the coalition of Progressive Conservatives and Liberal Party members fighting against workers' rights. That's not what we need; that's not what this province needs.

We already have a 50% precarious job rate; 50% of our workers in the GTA say they don't know if they're going to have a job next year. We need more unionization. We need more collective bargaining. That will help our economy. It always has. It's what built the States and it's what built Canada. Let's return to the roots of democracy, civil rights and collective bargaining, and let's not give this the time of day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 44 today, from my colleague from Simcoe-Grey, the capacity to pay act.

Many have long advocated in this Legislature and across the province that the arbitration system in Ontario is indeed broken and it's time to fix it. Take, for example, the dispute between the city of Stratford and the Stratford firefighters. An arbitrator in that case awarded a retroactive pay increase going back over three years—it was estimated that the cost to the municipality was \$1.5 million—and a 20% pay increase, with zero explanation from the arbitrator and no consideration of Stratford's capacity to pay.

The real impact, however, is felt across the entire community, not just those firefighters or those who sit on the local council. The real impact is felt when property

taxes skyrocket as a result, when a young family who purchases a home needs to reallocate their money that they might have intended spending on upgrading their home, and it has to be reallocated to higher taxes instead. That impact is felt again when the contractor who would have upgraded the family home never gets the call and never gets the job, and again when the local Home Hardware owner doesn't sell the contractor the supplies he would have needed to upgrade the family's home. This is the unseen, which is rarely spoken of and too often never realized.

When the arbitrator made that decision, he thought only of the two parties involved. The arbitrator only took into consideration the union's demand for wages and disregarded the impact that this would have, not only on the municipality's budget but the economy of Stratford as a whole and all of Ontario.

The problem is the way the law is written in this province. Technically, the arbitrator did nothing wrong. We allow arbitrators to be hand-picked; in essence, they're patronage appointments. We do not require that they publish a public report nor do we require them to explain or justify the award. I believe that must change. It's about showing taxpayers the respect they deserve. It's about creating a legislative framework that protects the taxpayers, not burdens them. The late Margaret Thatcher once said, "It is your tax which pays for public spending. The government have no money on their own. There is only taxpayers' money."

Last week, the member here from Trinity-Spadina, the coalition member, spoke out in this House about "our money," he said, and how we in this House must protect "our money." Well, it's not our money; it's the taxpayers' money. That money belongs to that young family I spoke of earlier, and when we take more money away from that family to pay for arbitration awards that the municipality can't afford, we are burdening that family even further. Yet that is what has happened in Stratford and is repeated daily across this province—like an arbitrator's decision in the small town of Smiths Falls, a town of less than 9,000 people, that has six of their policemen now on the sunshine list earning over \$100,000 a year.

Just as concerning is that there are no time limits to settle disputes. A disputed contract that requires an arbitrator often isn't settled until the next contract in question has already expired, sometimes two or three years later. What if instead of padding that sunshine list with another million and a half dollars—maybe if we didn't do that, we could afford proper care for those who are truly in need, care for a family that has an autistic son or daughter or a disabled man or woman who cannot provide for themselves. Sadly, instead, we choose to enrich a few and cause significant and further hardship for far too many.

I'm proud that we are the only party in this Legislature that realizes the consequences of these actions and are standing up and taking action to fix it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm so delighted to speak against this bill. So many other bills that the Conservatives have been bringing forth in this Legislature each and every week—God bless them; they are consistent—and they have a theme that they're developing each and every week. What's that theme? That theme is about attacking the unions, of course, or attacking civil servants, making sure that we cut their salaries, cut their pensions and/or eliminate them. This is the theme that runs through each and every one of those bills. God bless you, I give you 101% for consistency.

If only they devoted a little energy to those one- or two-percenters of Canadians and Ontarians who have a whole lot of money in their hands that Tories are happy to give them each and every year—Harper is so happy to give more and more to the two-percenters, and the Liberals have helped out in the last 10 years giving more and more to the one-percenters—if only they devoted just a little energy to take some of that money back that belongs—yes, to the people, to the taxpayers, to the little guy you defend each and every day—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Trinity-Spadina, I'd ask you to speak through the Chair.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: If only you spent just a little ounce of that time.

The member from Simcoe-Grey says the economy will grow again in spite of the Liberals. Well, it ain't gonna grow by cutting people's wages. It ain't gonna grow by cutting people's benefits. It ain't gonna grow by cutting people's pensions. It will grow if you go after the one- or two-percenters that you people feed on a regular basis each and every year. Maybe if we take some of that money back and give it back to the taxpayers, the ones the Tories pretend to support, then we would bring about a much more fair and just society.

What do the Tories want to do with this bill? They want to introduce a capacity to pay division, create a bureaucracy that they so much hate, who will be well paid, more than well paid than what arbitrators are likely to give out by setting up such a structure. These are the very people who want to bring down bureaucracies, but they don't mind creating yet another bureaucracy—the capacity to pay division—and give them huge sums of money to be able to contain the arbitration decisions that are made. God bless the Tories. You deserve applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: As always, it's an honour to speak on behalf of my constituents and to follow my colleague from Trinity-Spadina speaking to Bill 44.

I will absolutely not be supporting this bill. I think at the very heart of the question is the fact that our system is not broken when it comes to arbitrated settlements. They're on par with negotiated settlements; that's a fact that's out there right now.

So as my colleagues have pointed out in this House this afternoon, this is clearly an issue about pushing down wages, about beating up on our public sector, about beating up on unions. It's not something that I support. I don't think it's something that my constituents support, and that's why I won't be supporting it today.

1610

We are talking about members of the civil service, some of the people who do the most important work in my city and my community, and people who don't have the ability to negotiate through a strike. They negotiate their wages through arbitration, and this party would like to do something that's fundamentally undemocratic and doesn't actually make any sense. It absolves people in this Legislature of doing the job that they're sent here to do, which is to set priorities, make tough decisions and look out for the public interest. We're talking about our transit workers; we're talking about our police officers; we're talking about our firefighters; we're talking about our paramedics.

I met with paramedics yesterday, right here, and they told me about their daily lives. Their principal interest was not about themselves; it was about the public interest. They were talking about how we can deliver better health services, actually in more affordable ways, in this city, but they also told me that 25% of them are suffering with injuries, about the difficulties in their careers to actually retire, and I think the last thing we need to do is to kick our public servants in the teeth at this time.

There is an issue around municipalities here, and I think we need to address that. It's the fact that the PCs, when they were in government, and the Liberals as the current government have downloaded so many costs to our cities that our cities simply cannot pay the bills. Our cities are left without the resources to provide services, and that is an extraordinary problem. That issue is something that needs to be resolved today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Cambridge. No? Further debate? The member for Kitchener—

Interjection: Conestoga.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to take this opportunity to address the capacity to pay act, a thorough, well-thought-out, well-consulted bill by my colleague from Simcoe-Grey, Mr. Wilson. I'd like to thank him for his efforts in that.

Over the last few months, this important bill has received a number of significant endorsements. To start, we have gained the support of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards. In fact, the police services board encouraged all parties to collaborate as Bill 44 worked its way through the legislative process.

The board's support is echoed by the editorial team at the Windsor Star. They wrote just on Tuesday that this

bill “must be passed” to “put a stop to the outrageously generous arbitration rulings that are crippling communities all across Ontario.”

The Ottawa Sun equally praised the work of the PC Party on developing a comprehensive solution to fix the province’s arbitration system. In fact, the Sun’s editorial team called on the NDP and the Liberals to stop the nonsense and to support the much-needed reforms contained in this important bill.

Columnist Luisa D’Amato with the Waterloo Region Record agrees, saying, “The only way to fix this situation is a change in the rules of provincial arbitration.” She continues by explaining that “we’ve got a fiscal crisis and a sluggish economy on our hands. We’ve got to restore some sanity to the cost of public services.”

So many voices in government, municipalities, business and the media get the challenges we face. It’s time that the NDP and the Liberals get a grip on things as well. For years now, local governments have been waiting for the province to take steps toward serious arbitration reform, and every year they ask for the same thing. In fact, just last year, when the mayors of Waterloo region laid out their demands during the Waterloo region by-election in Kitchener–Waterloo, they specifically called on all candidates to do the right thing if elected and support a fundamental overhaul of our broken arbitration system. Waterloo mayor Brenda Halloran characterized the current system quite well when she said, “We have an overburdened taxpayer, and they can’t take a lot more.”

This cannot continue, so I hope the members to the left and the members opposite—including the member from Kitchener–Waterloo to my left, as well as the member from Kitchener Centre on the government side—will oblige the mayors’ request by standing up for local taxpayers and supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on a very important issue. I’m glad that this debate is taking place in the House because I think a lot of people did not hear this debate last year in the committee.

Let me get the government’s position out first, which is very important. Our government agrees that reforms are needed within the interest arbitration system, and we are committed to developing an arbitration system that works, is fair and is constitutional. I think those things are very important. In fact, in the speech from the throne, which was passed by this Legislature, this is what was stated, that the government “will sit down with its partners across all sectors to build a sustainable model for wage negotiation, respectful of both collective bargaining and a fair and transparent interest arbitration process, so that the brightness of our shared future is not clouded by the indisputable economic realities of our time.” That comes straight from the speech from the throne, which was passed by this Legislature, highlighting the government’s commitment to working with partners from our

municipal sector and our labour partners to ensure that we create a fair, transparent and timely interest arbitration mechanism.

It’s very interesting to note that this is the third PC bill on this topic, and if you read every single one of those bills, as I have done, they are all three different, which clearly highlights to me that the PC Party has no position on this issue. They’re trying to find a parade to jump in front of. In fact, a year ago, in 2012, through the budget process, where we had very specific proposals to create a system that was fair, timely and transparent based on a bill, actually, that Mr. Hillier, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, had presented—very close to that; in fact, a lot of the language came from the official opposition’s election platform—they voted against it. As the member from Trinity–Spadina said, they got into a coalition with the NDP and voted against it—clearly, playing politics with this issue from the beginning.

I can tell you, from my conversations with the municipal partners, they are extremely disappointed with the official opposition because when the rubber hit the road, when the work needed to get done, when a year ago we could have resolved this issue in order to create a fair interest arbitration process, where were the Conservatives? Well, they were voting with the NDP, Speaker, and they were, one by one, taking all the schedules out dealing with this very important issue. We could have resolved this. We could have solved this issue for our municipalities one year ago, but that official opposition missed the boat because they thought politics were more important than siding with our municipalities, and that is regretful.

Now what they are proposing in this particular bill today will result in an extremely prescriptive mechanism. Essentially, what they are proposing is binding the hands of the arbitrators and unabling the arbitrators from being able to do their job. They’re actually taking away the neutrality or the fairness from the interest arbitration system, which seriously undermines the constitutional validity of the scheme that is proposed in this particular bill.

What we need to do is ensure that the interest arbitration system is a fair one, ensure that the interest arbitration rules are neutral so that both parties can be part of the process, and if they are unable to get a negotiated settlement through collective bargaining, which is the best way of getting an agreement done—but if they fail to do so and they are in a situation that they’re an essential service, then they are in a similar place through an interest arbitration mechanism as they would have been through a free collective bargaining process. That is the essence of the system, and it is incumbent upon us, the legislators, to respect that balance, to ensure that the fairness within the system is essential.

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Mr. Drummond’s name and his pronouncements in the report that was commissioned by the government are often cited in this regard. One thing which is not cited is where he said, “The need to reach a balance between the

rights of workers and the needs of employers is a key component of our labour relations system.” That’s key, Speaker, because we need to make sure that we maintain fairness in the system, that we do bring reforms to the system so that it is timely, so that it is transparent. That’s exactly what we presented a year ago.

There are some significant challenges that are outlined in this particular bill. The overly prescriptive nature of the bill is, I think, creating a lot of doubt in many, many people. I, as the Minister of Labour, and this government are very much committed to ensuring that we do bring balance, that we do bring fairness, that we do bring transparency, and that we do bring timeliness to this process. I am engaged in those conversations, to ensure that we come up with reforms that will ensure all those key things, because in the absence of fairness and balance, we will have a system that favours one party over the other.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe—Grey, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Jim Wilson: From the number of tweets that I’m receiving, and our excellent critic of municipal affairs, Steve Clark—and I do want to thank Steve Clark. It was a pleasure going on the road with him and actually listening to municipalities, police services boards, the Ontario Hospital Association, mayors, deputy mayors, councillors across the province.

Look, Minister of Labour, you are so wrong in what you say and so out to lunch in terms of what’s going on out there.

The economy will grow again. We will have prosperity again when Tim Hudak gets to be Premier and we get to implement our jobs plan for the province.

In the meantime, we have to bring some sanity. We can’t continue to allow unelected arbitrators to give awards that are at three times the rate of growth in the economy and inflation combined. It’s an average of about 3% a year—600,000 men and women woke up this morning without a job. They’ve had a 100% pay cut. They’ve lost their jobs under your government, and they cannot afford to be paying, on their property taxes, 3% a year for employees who are already well compensated, who already have good pensions and health benefits; they’ve got the works.

We appreciate our police and our firemen and our paramedics and the nurses in our nursing homes, but even they realize that they’re getting a very good deal under arbitration, because they just kind of skip through the bargaining process now, and everybody waits for the arbitrator to come to town.

AMO is non-partisan, and they agree 100% with this bill. If you really wanted to do something with the arbitration system—yes, you mentioned it in last year’s budget. You prorogued the Parliament, you never brought a bill in, and you don’t intend to do a damned thing.

So don’t be fooled out there.

MINING AMENDMENT ACT
(RESOURCES PROCESSED
IN ONTARIO), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES MINES
(RESSOURCES TRANSFORMÉES
EN ONTARIO)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Mantha has moved second reading of Bill 43. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it. We’ll take the vote at the end of regular business.

OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT ACT
(CHILDREN’S AID SOCIETIES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L’OMBUDSMAN
(SOCIÉTÉS D’AIDE À L’ENFANCE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Miss Taylor has moved second reading of Bill 42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I thought I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We’ll take the vote at the end of the next bill.

PUBLIC SECTOR CAPACITY
TO PAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA CAPACITÉ
DE PAYER DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Wilson has moved second reading of Bill 44. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1625 to 1630.

MINING AMENDMENT ACT
(RESOURCES PROCESSED
IN ONTARIO), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES MINES
(RESSOURCES TRANSFORMÉES
EN ONTARIO)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Mantha has moved second reading of Bill 43.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Schein, Jonah
Campbell, Sarah	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	Natyshak, Taras	Vanthof, John

Gélinas, France	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakubski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Harris, Michael	Natyshak, Taras	
Hillier, Randy	Nicholls, Rick	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Hardeman, Ernie	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Murray, Glen R.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	O'Toole, John
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chan, Michael	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Chiarelli, Bob	Klees, Frank	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chudleigh, Ted	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	Leone, Rob	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Shurman, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Del Duca, Steven	MacLeod, Lisa	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dhillon, Vic	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Dickson, Joe	McKenna, Jane	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Dunlop, Garfield	McNaughton, Monte	Yakubski, John
Elliott, Christine	McNeely, Phil	Yurek, Jeff
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norm	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milligan, Rob E.	
Gravelle, Michael	Milloy, John	

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 55; the nays are 34.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Miss Taylor?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Government agencies? The member has requested that the bill be referred to government agencies. Agreed? Agreed.

Please open the doors for 30 seconds.

**PUBLIC SECTOR CAPACITY
TO PAY ACT, 2013**

**LOI DE 2013 SUR LA CAPACITÉ
DE PAYER DU SECTEUR PUBLIC**

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Wilson has moved second reading of Bill 44. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Elliott, Christine	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hillier, Randy	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakubski, John
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Fife, Catherine	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Forster, Cindy	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael

**OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT ACT
(CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES), 2013**

**LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'OMBUDSMAN
(SOCIÉTÉS D'AIDE À L'ENFANCE)**

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Miss Taylor has moved second reading of Bill 42. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John
Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Jackson, Rod	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Schein, Jonah
Campbell, Sarah	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Cansfield, Donna H.	MacLaren, Jack	Shurman, Peter
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Smith, Todd
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim	Taylor, Monique
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Norm	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Paul	Wilson, Jim

Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
DeLANEY, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad

Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John

Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanhof, John
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 36; the nays are 52.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I
declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders
of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment
of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The
government House leader has moved adjournment of the
House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion
carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1643.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hörwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature



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Monday 15 April 2013

Lundi 15 avril 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 April 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 avril 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rob Leone: I would like to take the opportunity to introduce Alanna Newman, who is the incoming Ontario PC Youth Association president and the president of the Scarborough–Guildwood PC Youth Association. I'd also like to introduce Stuart Clark, who is the presidential candidate for the Ontario PC Campus Association and president of the Queen's campus Conservatives. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a delight to welcome Girls in Government on Girls in Government day today. We have teachers Ms. Kathryn Grant and Ms. Anne Daley; we have students Jacqueline Pinnington, Una Crawley, Christina Roberto, Harmony Campbell, Alexandra Lucchese, Eva Newhook, Caitlin Aspinall, Anna McAlpine, Sydney Duffy, Kate Armstrong, Safis Assadolha, Olivia Hui, Kathleen Evans and Eva Bonjour-Liss; and parent Nancy Evans. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm just thrilled to introduce Dianne McKenzie. She is executive director of Epilepsy Durham Region. She is here today to meet with myself and MPP Dickson, and I believe she's met with many other MPPs. She's a delight. She's very organized. She's just a fantastic advocate for her organization.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my pleasure to introduce constituents from the great riding of Durham: Walter Stapleton and his granddaughter Rileigh Stapleton. Rileigh is a grade 7 student at Trinity College, who has expressed interest in my job in the future.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, it gives me great pleasure—sitting in the Speaker's gallery today is a former member of the provincial Parliament, Ken Keyes, who served here from 1985 to 1990. He was one of my predecessors as mayor of the city of Kingston and also one of my mentors who brought me into political life many, many years ago.

He is joined today by Yveta Tesar, who works with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in Kingston. She wanted the chance to visit Queen's Park to view question period and have lunch with her MPP.

I'm very pleased to welcome you both, and I'm sure you will join me in that as well, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the Attorney General for stepping on my task.

The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure to welcome to the assembly today my aunt and uncle, up from Nova Scotia to be part of the assembly. I won't make a comment on the favourite hockey team that they're going to watch tonight, but let's just say this: Go, Sens, go, and may the Leafs not make the playoffs yet again.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have friends here from Algoma–Manitoulin. Today one of our pages, Callum Arnold, is captain. His proud grandparents George and Leona Arnold are here, along with his parents, Kimberly and Wayne Arnold, and the beautiful, young, little sister, Sarah Rose Arnold. Please welcome them.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome Fiona Su, who is my new assistant in the constituency office. Welcome, Fiona, to the House.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to welcome the family of our page captain, Maddy Elliott. Maddy is a student in grade 7 at Laurelwood Public School in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo. I'd like to congratulate her and welcome her family, who are here with us today for question period, in the members' gallery: Adam Elliott, Frejia Elliott, Joe Elliott, Beverly Elliott, Shawna Elliott, Liam Kelly and Josie Chretien.

I would also like to recognize Constable Ralph Morales, who is up in the public gallery. He's Maddy's uncle.

We're all proud of you today, Maddy. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Speaker: I believe the comment made by the member from Nepean–Carleton was offensive to all Maple Leafs fans, and I would ask that you have her withdraw that statement.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I haven't even tried, and I've lost control.

I'd like to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for setting us in the right tone.

In deference to the Attorney General, it is the Speaker's joy to introduce former members, and I'm going to actually duplicate that introduction by introducing Mr. Ken Keyes from Kingston and the Islands, in the 33rd and 34th Parliaments. Welcome to the Speaker's gallery of the House.

Also, today in the Speaker's gallery, we have, from the great riding of Brant, Kailyn Gadsby from Brantford and Rosemary Crawford from Paris, both recipients of the InterMune IPF Legacy Scholarship Program, living

with a debilitating disease. Joining them today are their family and friends: Susan Gadsby, Aaron Gadsby, Miranda Mabini, Carrie-Lyn MacNeil, Paul Crawford, Annette Crawford. And from InterMune Canada: Joel Bathe, Rod Elliot and Megan Boyle. Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for being here.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have a feeling you're going to be saying sorry quite a bit today.

I beg to inform the House that, in accordance with section 87 of the Legislative Assembly Act, the name of the following person appointed to serve on the Board of Internal Economy has been communicated to me as chair of the Board of Internal Economy: Donna Cansfield, MPP, is appointed by the caucus of the government in the place of David Oraziotti, MPP.

1040

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Leeds—Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I would like to correct my record in a question on Thursday to Premier Wynne asking her to support the capacity to pay act. I quoted an Ottawa Sun editorial. What I said at the time was that the editorial said, "This bill should be supported by all parties. Stop" the madness. In fact, the editorial read, "This bill should be supported by all parties. Stop this nonsense."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order, and the member is very within his rights to correct his own record. Thank you.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker, and good morning. My question is for the Minister of Finance. The people of Ontario, Minister, anxiously await a budget date. The hearings of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs have concluded. The final report is being assembled and should be in the hands of the minister this week.

While having no confidence in this government, the PC Party does have a job to do on behalf of all Ontarians. Our job is to ensure that the McGuinty-Wynne government stays true to its word and provides a balanced budget on schedule—your schedule, 2017-18, because based on facts and figures we do not believe that you can or that you will.

Minister, you have refused to categorically state that you will balance the budget on time. I'd be very happy with a simple yes or no response. Will you meet that date and balance the budget, yes or no?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I am very proud of the outstanding work that's being done by all Ontarians, recognizing that for the last four years running we've beat our targets. We have conceded in achieving some outstanding results on behalf of our province. We are on target to balance our books by 2017-18 as planned, and we'll do it with or without the opposition. I hope you'll support us because what we plan forward is going to be the appropriate thing for all Ontarians in a balanced approach to ensure that no extreme initiatives are taken that would hinder that recovery, because we are on track to achieve a balanced budget by 2017-18.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Minister, your response is laughable but it's not funny.

We in the opposition have dismantled and analyzed the figures. Speaker, we simply do not accept the possibility even remotely that Minister Sousa could possibly deliver a balanced budget in the McGuinty-Wynne government's stated time frame, and I'd like to send over a slide deck so that we can share with you the work that we've done.

Your wavering and refusal to be specific causes us and indeed the major credit agencies to worry. Ontario needs jobs creation and investment. Your hesitation and your coached media coyness tell us that you don't know how to balance the books. You've already dipped into the only savings you had from the past fiscal year to pay for your government's capitulation to the teachers' unions. Your cupboard is bare. What are you going to do about it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's put this in perspective. We have 400,000 more net new jobs since the recession, the worst recession in history over the last 90 years, and we have achieved some outstanding success. We've now been able to bend our cost curve. We're implementing over 50% of Drummond's recommendations. We've taken on a report by Jobs and Prosperity and we're looking also at social reform to support those most vulnerable so that everybody can succeed, and we are doing it in a very, very collaborative way because that's the way to go.

What the opposition is suggesting is extreme measures, slash and burn, do away with those in need and ensure that what would end up happening is in fact even a worse recovery. What we need is to facilitate that recovery because it is a sensitive recovery, and we are on track because we've achieved those targets and more, and that's exactly what you're going to hear in our budget going forward—

Interjection.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Your slide deck I welcome. What I really—

Interjections.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —good solutions going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: We provided them. Frankly, Speaker, we're tired of the new minister practising his answer evasion skills on the media and now to the people of Ontario. Business as usual for your government is a disaster for our economy and for the people of Ontario. People are tired of these teasers. Just answer the questions, Minister. It's simple. How about the straight goods right now? When are you tabling your budget? Are you maintaining or breaking your promise to balance in 2017-18? What services are being cut, or, conversely, what taxes are being raised?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me be clear. We beat our targets four years running. We're going towards a balanced budget by 2017-18. We're working with Ontarians—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That'll do. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: And to Rick Brennan's question, I guarantee that we are working towards every possibility to balance our budget by 2017-18, and we will do what's necessary to achieve that success.

We've incorporated a lot of recommendations from a lot of people around the province, because we have reached out to everyone as much as we can. Well over 600,000 people have been touched in terms of what it is we want. We've got input from a lot of people to make this a budget that speaks to the people of Ontario, and we will work towards that, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate all of the recommendations and input that has been made.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Last week, I asked you 11 questions and sent a letter asking to know the true cost of the secret OSSTF deal—still no details. It's common knowledge that the retirement gratuities alone cost \$63 million. This does not include the extended maternity benefits, nor does it include the attendance recognition.

Can you inform the House how much the enhanced maternity benefits and the attendance recognition will be used from your so-called savings?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very happy to report to the House that we do have an agreement with OSSTF. That agreement is in the process of being ratified as we speak, and I'm very optimistic that that agreement will be ratified.

What's really important about the agreement is that we will be able to move forward with our teachers, who are our front-line professionals—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham, come to order. The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Liz Sandals:—in having a school system that is an absolutely excellent—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order. You were too busy yelling to hear me say "Order"—specifically to you, and the member from Chatham.

Hon. Liz Sandals: One of the things that we're particularly proud of is that because we have approached our teachers in a collegial manner, in fact we do have extra-curricular activities returned to our secondary schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, that is 12 questions, one letter and zero answers.

The Premier said last week—she acknowledged that she moved money around. She hasn't put the so-called savings into either front-line classrooms or paying down the deficit.

We know the retirement gratuities cost \$63 million alone. The OSSTF MOU and the ministry's own numbers suggest that the maternity benefits can be calculated to \$16 million, and the attendance recognition at \$35 million. That means the secret OSSTF deal is costing students, parents and school boards \$114 million at minimum, Speaker, and that's without opening the ETFO agreement or the "me-too" clauses.

When this is all said and done, you will be rearranging hundreds of millions of dollars in the education budget. So I ask you, what programs are going to be cut in order to be paying for this money-moving scheme in the Liberal government?

Hon. Liz Sandals: One of the things I find truly amazing is that the opposition finds it offensive if, working within our budget, we can find a way which makes the school boards happier and the unions happier and the government equally happier, and the kids getting extra-curriculars back—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland, come to order.

Hon. Liz Sandals:—I mean, I just find this amazing that making things work better is bad. I always thought making things work better was good. But what do you know? The opposition thinks making things work better is a bad thing.

I'm sorry, Speaker; I'm very confused by this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We think spending money you don't have is bad.

By the way, anybody who is counting: 13 questions, one letter and zero responses.

The OSSTF deal alone cost, at a minimum, \$114 million. The reopened deal with ETFO and the "me-too" clauses for OECA and AEFO have not even been calculated yet.

You're trying to make the public and this assembly believe that this is not going to cost anything. I'm sorry, \$114 million comes at a price to our students.

1050

Laurel Broten and Dalton McGuinty said that they chose FDK and lower class sizes over enhanced teacher benefits. Your secret OSSTF deal chose sick-day cash payouts instead of class sizes and FDK. You can't have it both ways; or were Ms. Broten and Mr. McGuinty misleading this House, or are you?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Certainly, Speaker. Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is an opportune time to remind members that we do not use individuals' names. We identify them by their title or by their riding. And I will also remind members that I will be moving to the next question if the continuation of using unparliamentary language was just to simply get on the record and move forward.

Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would like to assure the parents and students of this province that we have made absolutely no changes to the roll-in of full-day kindergarten. That will continue exactly as planned, and we have not changed the class sizes. We still have the lower class sizes and all the staff that we chose to protect and the \$1.8 billion in savings that were announced in January. Those \$1.8 billion in savings still exist in March, in April and going forward. This new agreement is not costing taxpayers in Ontario one dollar more. The costing in January is the same as the overall costing in April. The savings from January are the same as the savings in April.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier—

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps Mr. Yakabuski would ask it for me.

Later today, the Auditor General is going to report on the cost of the cancelled power plant in the Mississauga situation. Whether that costs \$190 million or more, that's money that could have been spent on people's priorities.

Will the Premier apologize for wasting millions of dollars to save a few Liberal seats, which could have been used to get people working, to get the health care that they need, and to get life more affordable for every-day Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Auditor General will report today on the costs, and we welcome his report, but let's be clear: We listened to the residents of Oakville, we listened to the residents of Mississauga, and we relocated those gas plants. Not only that, as this House knows—every member in this House—all parties agreed that that was the action that needed to be taken. All parties now, I believe, have a responsibility to move forward, improve the siting of future energy projects and ensure that we get it right from the beginning.

I've been very clear that it is my wish that we had been able to make those decisions earlier and get it right

from the beginning. That's what we need to do now, but everyone in this House agreed that those gas plants needed to be relocated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Everybody agreed that they didn't belong there. New Democrats said we wouldn't tear up contracts sight unseen. That's the reality, but the reality is also that there is \$190 million, at the very least, that the Liberals decided to spend or waste in order to save some of their own seats. That money could have been used to put 25,000 young people in this province to work with the NDP's First Start program. It could eliminate the wait-list in home care in this province, and could guarantee that people actually get the home care services that they need within a five-day wait. Instead, it was handed to a private power company in a cynical attempt by Liberals to hold on to power.

Will the Premier admit that it was wrong? Will she just admit that it was wrong for her government to put the needs of the Liberal Party ahead of these kinds of changes for Ontario's people?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand where the leader of the third party is coming from, except that she can't have it both ways. She can't say that, on one hand, she would relocate the plant and then say but she wouldn't rip up the contract. That's just not how it works. We made a commitment. All the parties made a commitment that they would relocate the gas plant. That's what they said all along. That was the promise that was made on both of these gas plants, and we followed through.

So I say to the leader of the third party, I wish it had been different. I wish we had made a decision earlier that would have meant that that money didn't have to be spent, Mr. Speaker. But once the decision was made—a decision on which we all agreed—then we had to go forward. We had to go through the process of relocating the plant, and that was the decision that was made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, it's unfortunate that the Premier only likes to look at one little, tiny part of the puzzle. The bottom line is, this party over here, called the New Democratic Party, is the only party in this Legislature that does not support private power deals, whether they're in Oakville, whether they're in Mississauga, wherever they are.

Here are the facts, just to remind the Premier: The government signed a private power deal, and then not only did they scrap it but they hid the true cost of that decision from the public because it would help them win seats and hold on to power. People are tired of watching the government put the needs of the Liberal Party ahead of the needs of the people of Ontario. Is the Premier ready to say that this was wrong? Just say that it was wrong and that the government should not have done it and apologize.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am quite in opposition to looking at this narrowly. I actually am trying to look at

the big picture, Mr. Speaker. I'm trying to put in place a process to go forward that will be better. I think that the upfront process—the communication with the communities—needs to be better so that we don't make decisions we have to backtrack on. The reality is that it's always going to cost more if you have to renegotiate a decision, if you have to backtrack on a decision. So let's get it right in the first place. That is my objective. The reality is that all the parties in this House agreed that the location of these two gas plants was not right. We followed through on our commitment to move the gas plant. That was our commitment to the people of Mississauga and the people of Oakville, and we followed through.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier, Speaker. I've got say, though, that it's unfortunate that Liberal arrogance prevented them from making the right decision a long time ago. That's why we're in this mess.

Late last week, we learned that 26 more cancer patients received over-diluted chemotherapy drugs. Can the Premier tell us whether all affected patients have now been identified?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I want to begin by expressing my deep sadness that this happened. I was in London on the weekend; of course, London has been very shaken by this change.

What I can tell you is that all of the hospitals have reviewed all of their files. They believe they have identified all patients who did receive these particular drugs, and those patients have been notified.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people who undergo chemotherapy treatment and their loved ones are already facing some of the toughest chapters in their lives. The government failed to provide oversight to protect them and still can't answer some basic questions. When will the Premier and the government be able to tell us definitively that all affected patients have actually been identified?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as the leader of the third party is well aware, we have pulled together all the partners who have something to contribute to understanding what went wrong here, because something did go wrong here. We owe it to patients to ensure that we understand what happened and that we take the steps to ensure that it never happens again. That work is well under way, Speaker. Dr. Thiessen was appointed just last week, and he is on this full-time, getting answers to the questions that patients and their loved ones and, indeed, all of us have.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, when families are struggling with something as frightening as cancer, they

need to know their government is ensuring that they're getting the best possible care they can get. Instead, they see key parts of their treatment outsourced, no oversight and no answers to basic questions like, "Did this actually affect me?"

This never should have happened, and the people need real answers, Speaker. Why won't the Premier let the Ontario Ombudsman look into this scandal and use his expertise to get to the answers that people actually deserve?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The leader of the third party identified a question that cancer patients have: "What does this mean for me?" That is the most important and first question that hospitals are working to answer. That is why they reached out to all affected patients, Speaker. They arranged for group sessions where people could come and ask their questions, and they've arranged for speedy access to individual meetings with with patients' oncologists.

1100

I can tell you that our hospitals have really demonstrated their commitment to patients through this chapter. They have worked tirelessly around the clock to ensure that the appropriate patients have been contacted and that they are getting answers to questions.

We still have questions, Speaker. That is why Dr. Thiessen and the working group are continuing to work very hard to get answers to questions.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, as you're aware, thousands of Ontario's most vulnerable patients—cancer patients—have been given diluted chemotherapy drugs. People across Ontario are wondering how this could have happened and are shaken by this breach in our health care system.

Today we'll be bringing forward a motion in the social policy committee for an investigation into how such a breach could have happened and how we can prevent it from ever happening again. Minister, will you and the other Liberal members be supporting our motion?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, just to correct the record, because I think facts are very important in this case: It is incorrect to say "thousands" of patients; it is correct to say "hundreds" of patients.

What I can tell you, though, is that I do understand the opposition will be bringing forward a motion. We certainly support an investigation. We have several investigations under way currently. Yes, we will support this, but we do need to get all of the players participating in this. We cannot have a narrow scope. It needs to have the full scope. Patients deserve answers to the whole question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again, just for the record: There is clear evidence that there are over 1,200 people who have been impacted by this.

Minister, this isn't the time for another backroom investigation conducted by Liberal appointees. Ontario

hospitals have been getting chemotherapy drugs from an unaccredited, unlicensed drug manufacturer. Thousands of people have been impacted by this oversight failure, and Ontarians deserve to have an open and transparent investigation into what happened. Most of all, they deserve this in a timely manner and not at a time that suits the Liberal government.

Minister, will you promise the families and individuals that have been impacted by this control failure, and support our motion for an open, transparent investigation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the first question, yes, we will support that. It's important, though, to expand to include others, like Health Canada, the College of Pharmacists and so on, in this mandate.

I must take serious objection, however, to the aspersions that were cast upon the character of Dr. Jake Thiessen. Dr. Thiessen is a highly regarded expert when it comes to cancer and when it comes to pharmacy. He is absolutely the right person for the job, and I would ask the member to withdraw her characterization—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. In 2010, this government made decisions that changed the auto insurance industry's profit margin in this province. They slashed accident benefits by 15%. These changes resulted in an annual savings of \$2 billion. Yet in the past two years, our premiums have gone up by 5%.

In this upcoming budget, will the government pass on the billions of dollars of savings to Ontario drivers in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you for the question from the opposition member, who has brought forward a recommendation, through a private member's bill, to address the issue of auto insurance in a gradual way, to reduce it over time. As noted, our government also introduced legislation in 2004 around the same issue.

We need to work collaboratively; we need to work together. I appreciate the input from the third party, unlike the opposition, who have criticized this budget process and have already said no to something they haven't even read.

I appreciate your consideration going forward. We will work together to try to find ways to reduce the rates so that all Ontarians can benefit from the work that we do collaboratively.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: On Friday, a desperate insurance industry released a report—a couple of studies—that magically made the profits, these billions of dollars, disappear. In this sleight-of-hand trick they accomplished by reducing and making all these profits disappear—they used different numbers than FSCO, the Ministry of Finance's own branch, uses.

Will this government reject this self-serving report and, for once, side in favour of the 9 million residents of Ontario and decide in favour of drivers here in this province? And will this government ensure that in the upcoming budget, the 15% reduction in auto insurance premiums is implemented within a year of the budget being passed and that the savings are passed on to drivers in Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: As all members of this House know, we've implemented—we commissioned a report on the anti-fraud task force to find ways to get at the root causes of what's happening in the industry, to ensure that we reduce the costs of insurance that affect our premiums ultimately.

As we know, in Ontario we're paying up to 10 times more than they do in other provinces for treatment, so we've got to find ways to ensure that we get at those root causes, ensure that we eliminate some of the fraud that's happening and ensure that we protect all citizens.

So I will commit to providing some direction as to what we need to do in this budget, together with all members of this House, to benefit all Ontarians, and we will do just that in the upcoming budget.

NURSES

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We all know the vital role nurses play in the care of sick and injured Ontarians. I've spent many years working as a front-line health care worker, including being a registered nurse, and that experience made me keenly aware of the importance of good nursing care in improving the health of all Ontarians. It also made me very aware of the pressure nurses face day in and day out. Our population is aging, and their role is only growing more important and pressures are ongoing and more intense.

People in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt and across the province will all depend on the care of hard-working nurses at some point in their lives. My constituents are concerned that their nurses' skills are not being fully utilized.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can she please tell the House what the government is doing to ensure that nurses are able to do the best job they can?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for this very important question. Ontario's nurses are the backbone of our health care system, and Ontario's nurses are the best nurses in the world.

We know that we need to get the most out of these skills and the knowledge that Ontario's nurses have. That's why I was delighted when, on Friday, the Premier announced to the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario a commitment to expand the types of services that nurses can perform to improve the care of their patients. We are working with the College of Nurses of Ontario to expand the scope of registered nurses and registered practical nurses in providing care. With these changes,

nurses will be able to dispense medications in certain circumstances.

This builds on increases we've made to the scope of practice for nurses, creating five new nursing roles like registered nurse surgical first assist, in which specially educated RNs work collaboratively with surgeons in the operating room.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Minister, I know that the constituents of my riding will be happy to know that nurses will be able to provide a greater range of services to provide care to Ontarians when they need it.

I also know that our government ensured that there are more than 15,000 more nurses in the province today than there were in 2003. As more nurses are providing care in Ontario, it's also increasingly important to make sure nurses receive the support they need so they can continue to provide the quality care for their patients.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister, can she please tell us what else the government is doing to support nurses in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I share the member from Scarborough–Agincourt's commitment to our nurses. We need Ontario to be the best province in Canada for nurses to provide care.

I'm proud of what our government has already done. We've made Ontario one of the first jurisdictions in the world to create a full-time job opportunity for new nursing graduates through a comprehensive orientation program. Some 14,000 new nursing graduates have benefited from a full-time opportunity through this nursing graduate program.

In 2007, we opened Canada's first nurse-practitioner-led clinic in Sudbury. This successful pilot has led to the opening of 26 nurse-practitioner-led clinics.

We know that nurses provide the best care when they're able to use their skills all the time. That's why I'm very pleased that we've increased the proportion of nurses working full time from under 50% to almost 70%, and we've invested \$40 million in a nursing retention fund to help retrain and retain nurses.

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POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Premier. Premier, let's pick up where we left off on Thursday, when I exposed your deep involvement in the Oakville gas plant cancellation. Here's a July 29, 2011, document that provides instructions to the Minister of Energy from a cabinet meeting he attended. Clearly we were entitled to this document. It falls perfectly within the committee's guidelines.

Premier, you were aware of this document. It was tabled at a meeting where you sat in the chair, which is why you're in the hot seat again today.

Premier, do you deny intimate knowledge of the cost of the gas plant cancellations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader will want to comment on the details of what happened at committee. But the document was provided to committee last week, after the committee passed a new document production motion requesting Cabinet Office documents. That is how the document proceeded.

But Mr. Speaker, I have been clear the decision was made—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. That one got me. The member from Renfrew apologized before I even finished standing up, so I thank you very much for bringing attention to yourself.

Carry on, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been clear, Mr. Speaker, we listened to the residents of Oakville; we listened to the residents of Mississauga. We made a decision; we acted on that decision. It was a decision that was supported by everyone in this House.

I was a member of the government, I was part of the cabinet, and so I was part of implementing that decision and that meant that the document that I signed was part of that implementation of that decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, all taxpayers really want to know is how much this Liberal gas plant scandal is going to cost and who ordered the documents to be withheld. Your Liberal government continues to stick to your \$40-million story for Oakville and your \$190-million story for Mississauga, yet we've had witness after witness swear under oath that the cost of these cancellations will top \$1 billion.

Now, Premier, you know the cost. We have these documents that prove you were intimately involved in the cabinet discussions on these settlements. Will you end the charade today, turn over all the documents we were entitled to half a year ago and tell us the full cost of your gas plant scandal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think in the series of questions that were asked today, there were two questions. One, who prevented the production of all the documents? Well, Mr. Speaker, that honourable member and his colleagues, both in the PC Party and the NDP, prevented all the documents from coming forward when government members put forward that motion. He raised his hand and voted against it.

The second question was about the Premier's knowledge, and I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we understand the Premier knew that all parties in this Legislature opposed both plants, and notwithstanding the best efforts of the leader of the New Democratic Party today to try to distance herself, let me share a quote here

from Mayor Hazel McCallion, when she told the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, "The impression that was certainly given beyond a doubt ... I think all parties would have cancelled it; there's no question about it."

Mr. Speaker, that is only one of many quotes showing the New Democratic Party was in full opposition to that plan.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question, Speaker, is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Minister, for five years I've been proposing legislation to ensure condominium owners have recourse when faced with sub-standard conditions, rigged repair contracts or unfair fee increases.

Last year, the government finally launched a review of the Condominium Act, but the review is taking years to complete and it ignores many of the issues condo owners face, such as changing Tarion, changing the building code and the need to have an independent tribunal.

Why won't the government take real action to protect condo owners now?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to thank the member from the third party for his question and his ongoing interest in and dedication to our review of the Condominium Act. As he said, we are in the process of reviewing this act right now, and I'm very pleased to report that the process is moving forward, on schedule and on time.

In fact, we had reports completed at the end of March, in our phase one, and stage two is under way. I met with the expert panel on condominium review just a few weeks ago, Speaker. They are on their way to completing their work. In stage three, a residents' panel will be convened. And in the fall—the fall of this year, Speaker—the public will review and validate the action plan before it's presented to the government. So we're moving forward in a very open and democratic way, getting all input, taking all the issues that are identified and the opportunities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, the pace of the review is about equal to that of a snail. Secondly, when I read the review—it misses three essential things that I've been fighting for for five long years: first, a tribunal where condo owners could go and get real protection and defend themselves against a tyrannical board, a bad developer or a bad or incompetent property manager; secondly, the building code changes that would make sure that people do not hear every noise that's coming from the other unit; and three, a warranty program that protects consumers and not developers.

My question to you is: Will you guarantee that these very changes that I've been fighting for will be part of the recommendations you will be bringing forward?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: What I can guarantee is that all the input—all the discussions that have been brought forward by the public, by residents' panels, by the expert panel—will indeed be considered. This is an open and democratic process.

In fact, I think I've already reported to the House, Speaker, but perhaps I could remind the member—I also appreciated that he sent his staff to a technical briefing that I offered specifically for all my opposition critics. Just to refresh the House's memory, the top five issues affecting the condo community, as reported by all the stakeholders, are governance, dispute resolution, financial management, consumer protection and qualifications of condo managers. The additional issues that the member opposite is raising—very happy to consider them as part of the public review and as we move forward this year on a review of the Condominium Act. It's important to modernize this act.

WIRELESS SERVICES

Mr. Kim Craiton: My question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Minister, one of the major concerns in rural Ontario, which includes my riding of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie: access to services and infrastructure. One area where this is particularly important is when it comes to Internet services. Businesses in my riding and across Ontario require stable, fast and reliable Internet connections in order to conduct important duties and expand to new markets. While broadband Internet is easily accessible in urban communities, rural communities have unique needs and challenges. I want to be assured that this government has taken those needs into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister please inform the House what is being done to increase access to broadband Internet services in Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for Niagara Falls—the hard-working member for Niagara Falls—who does such a great job for his community.

Mr. Speaker, as you would know, in the 19th century, the transcontinental railway was a way to link community to community to community. In the 21st century, it's broadband connectivity. So I want to let you know what we're doing. Since 2003, our government has committed up to \$127 million for broadband expansion in rural Ontario. This investment will create jobs and connect our rural communities to the world. Since 2007, more than 250,000 rural Ontarians have had access to a high-speed network, and that number will grow to one million once all the projects are completed.

By working together, we're strengthening rural communities and helping to ensure growth and prosperity for all Ontarians, regardless of where they live.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Kim Craiton: My question is again to the minister. I'm glad to hear that the new government has taken the needs of small rural municipalities seriously. I want to tell the minister that in my riding, we have benefitted from some of the investments you made reference to.

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All Ontarians appreciate the vital role high-speed broadband Internet plays in modern life. It allows fam-

ilies to stay connected; importantly, businesses to connect with the entire world; and communities to thrive.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Rural Affairs: I heard some good news recently about broadband services. Could the minister share with the House and the people of Ontario the latest news on what this government has done to improve access to Internet services to rural communities across this province?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for his supplementary. I want to indicate that last Friday, we went live in Northumberland county. I was joined by the very fine member Mr. Milligan, the member from Northumberland—Quinte West, and I was joined by his federal counterpart, Mr. Norlock. It was a great day for Northumberland county.

On Friday, I was honoured to attend the announcement marking the completion of the Northumberland local access zone of the Eastern Ontario Regional Network. Our government has committed up to \$55 million to expand high-speed broadband access in eastern Ontario. This announcement shows great progress. In total, the project aims to bring basic broadband access to 95% of households and businesses in eastern Ontario.

Working together, we can secure a prosperous future for families and businesses in eastern Ontario. It was a great day for everybody in Cobourg.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, farmers were outraged after learning they would have to fork out thousands of dollars more every year to pay for massive new eco taxes in order to fund your government's tire-recycling monopoly. But then you got caught. You were called out by the Ontario PC Party and hard-working farmers across the province. So you went on damage control, looking for a way out. And what was your solution? Tinkering with the eco tax funding formula. Now, instead of a 2,000% increase, farmers will face a 1,000% increase, only to have the next 1,000% tacked on to the bill sometime next year.

Minister, does your eco tax policy change mean you remain committed to your failed tire tax program?

Hon. James J. Bradley: As an individual who is part of the party that brought in the flawed Waste Diversion Act in 2002, which everybody has been trying to work with since—and by the way, your leader was the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations at that time, so you might call him the godfather of eco taxes in this province, because he failed to protect the people of this province when that legislation was brought in.

I want to say I was pleased that the Ontario Tire Stewardship, which is independent of government, set up under legislation that you as a government brought in, sat down with the farmers and tried to come to a conclusion which would be beneficial to both and to find a formula that was reasonable.

But I think everybody in this House agrees that your flawed legislation has to be completely changed, and that

is the goal of our government: to change that legislation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, you can play that blame game all you want, but Ontarians know the truth. Speaker, they had 10 years to amend the Waste Diversion Act and have done nothing—nothing. Instead, your government chose to use this piece of legislation to grow massive new—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First of all, I might want to come to this side and say, “Stop heckling,” but I have to come to this side and say, “Stop heckling,” because I’m having trouble hearing the question.

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, their government chose to use this piece of legislation to grow massive new bureaucracy and develop excessive new taxation powers.

Last November, the PC Party called on you to end your eco tax programs, yet you chose not to act. Now there's a growing chorus of voices, all telling you to dismantle your recycling monopolies—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Michael Harris: —which surprisingly now even include the Toronto Star. Everyone understands that these programs unfairly penalize consumers and unnecessarily restrain the ingenuity of the free market.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Michael Harris: So, Minister, I'm asking you today, will you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You've got to get your timing down.

Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: What I am going to commit to is undoing the damage that your government did when it brought in the Waste Diversion Act of Ontario. I recall, sitting at the table at the time—some here may remember this—was none other than your leader, who was Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, and did nothing to protect the consumer.

But I do note that there has been a change, I think, in view by the opposition. I notice that we see now that the head of Waste Diversion Ontario is opposed to this. I notice that Rob Cook, as well, has said there's no use tinkering with this act, which of course you established. He said that the act has to be completely revamped.

What I have said, to you and to others, is that we're going to get rid of that Conservative act which has caused so many problems and enabled this situation to arise.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. My office continues to be contacted by constituents who are still uncertain of the safety of drugs administered in the hospital, and it's no surprise why. Friday, we learned that

26 more patients were affected by the mis-dosing of chemotherapy drugs, and everyone is still confused about exactly who is responsible for ensuring the safety of all drugs brought into our hospitals. No clear answers are coming from the hospital, the drug companies, the regulators or the ministry.

Why has the minister allowed the confusion to continue for so long?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important to acknowledge that this is a tremendously difficult time for those cancer patients. They have all been contacted and they are meeting with their oncologists.

Neil Johnson, the vice-president of cancer care at London Health Sciences Centre, has said that his medical oncologists have reviewed the cases. They are confident that there is no causal link between the under-dosing and the deaths. He said, "I am saying it didn't contribute to the deaths."

What I can tell you is that we must get answers to questions. I wish there were simple answers. I wish someone would stand up and give us all the answers. The reality is, there are many layers of accountability. We must ensure that all of those partners who have a part of the responsibility are together. That's why we brought them all together, including Health Canada, which has a very important role to play in this to get answers to those questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: London residents are gravely concerned that the Minister of Health, who is also the local MPP to so many, has been so missing in action. She has been unable or unwilling to answer the most basic questions of oversight and seems to be more concerned with dodging responsibility than answering the questions of her constituents. For London residents like Barry, who was given the wrong dose and who will find out if he is cancer-free in the next two months, this confusion is unbearable, Minister.

Will the minister please do her job as both the MPP for her riding and the Minister of Health and allow the Ontario Ombudsman to do his job and get to the bottom of this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I take my responsibility as Minister of Health of the province of Ontario very, very seriously. That's why we have pulled together all of the people and organizations that have accountability and ownership of this issue. It's very clear that something went wrong. Something went very wrong. We must collectively understand what happened and put in place those safeguards to ensure that this never happens again. That's why I've appointed Dr. Jake Thiessen to do a review of cancer drugs in the supply chain, because we must never allow this to happen again.

I was pleased that New Brunswick Premier David Alward, who of course has patients affected as well, has said, "I'm very pleased to see how quickly the government of Ontario has moved forward with a decision on the investigation."

We are moving quickly, but it's very important we get answers to questions and get those from experts.

1130

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, as you know, Sheridan polytechnic college, which shines brighter nationally and internationally, is located in my great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. Colleges and universities are places of learning, growth and discovery.

We hope they are also places which are safe places for our students; however, these institutions are not immune from dangers such as sexual violence. Studies show that 15% to 25% of female students will experience sexual assault during their academic career.

Minister, will you please tell this House what our government is doing to protect our students while they are on campus?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you to the member for Mississauga-Brampton South for raising this important issue. Unfortunately, sexual violence is much too prevalent in the lives of far too many young women in our society. Our government and Ontario colleges and universities share a commitment to providing all post-secondary students with a safe and fulfilling learning environment. We do not tolerate sexual violence in our communities and we do not tolerate it on our campuses.

That's why, last year, we introduced a four-year Sexual Violence Action Plan which focuses on raising public awareness to prevent sexual violence, improving services for victims, and strengthening the criminal justice response. The action plan was based on input from 30 consultative meetings. As part of the action plan, we launched a resource guide, *Developing a Response to Sexual Violence: A Resource Guide for Ontario's Colleges and Universities*. We are providing it to our colleges and universities across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm happy to hear about the vital resources we are providing to the campuses all across our province. It is very important for the campus community to be informed and educated. Sexual violence is unacceptable; however, education alone will not help reduce the frequency of sexual violence.

Minister, what are the practical tools which are available in the resource guide to help campuses to protect our students?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The guide provides tools to develop policies and response protocols, including templates to help clearly communicate to campus communities about sexual violence prevention and response, a glossary of relevant terms, applicable legislation, and provincial services available to assist victims.

Speaker, there is always more to do. As our world continues to grow in an online community, we must acknowledge the need for new approaches to tackle on-line sexual harassment and violence and child pornography. That's why our government has now written twice to the federal justice minister seeking an amendment to

the Criminal Code on cyberbullying and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. That's why, at our request, FPT officials are currently examining gaps in the Criminal Code.

We must also change the culture around the word "consent." Young people often do not fully understand consent and feel that consent can be implied unless there is a clear "no." This must change, Speaker. No one consents to being sexually assaulted. Consent must be unequivocal.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, a question to the Premier: When first elected leader, you promised almost daily to reform social assistance. You said that the Lankin-Sheikh report was "our government's report." This was the second report from your government. The Drummond commission recommended to cut bureaucracy and cut duplication that prevents recipients from getting a job.

What happened, Premier? Why the silence? What's going on here? Drummond, Lankin-Sheikh and our PC white paper all recommend consolidating Ontario Works and ODSP for efficiency, for cost effectiveness—jobs, for those on social assistance. What's the holdup?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I cannot resist; I am going to send the supplementary to the Minister of Community and Social Services because I know he'll want to talk about details. But I want to respond because I think it's terrific that the member opposite from this party is asking a question about social assistance. It shows a compassion that I think is really appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, I remain absolutely committed to beginning to implement the Lankin-Sheikh report. We've been very clear. As the Minister of Finance has said, this is part of the discussion that we're having in the run-up to the budget. We've been very, very clear. It's important to us that we get this right. It's very important to us that, as part of the economic growth and the economic plan of the province, everyone can take part, including people who have been marginalized and for whom the system has actually kept them out of the workforce. We are committed to moving ahead, Mr. Speaker, and I know the minister will want to speak to the details.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Back to the Premier, Speaker: Your reports, Premier, call for measures to help recipients get jobs. You've obviously done nothing. I mentioned that our official opposition published a white paper to cut bureaucracy and cut duplication, again, to help recipients get jobs. I received all-party support for a private member's bill to foster employment and permit disabled people to keep more of their own money. It passed second reading. That was three years ago. A few weeks ago, I introduced a private member's bill to cut waste through consolidation while protecting the distinct needs of people with disabilities.

What happened to you, Premier? What happened to your priority to reform social assistance? We have seen no action.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, we are moving ahead. There are 108 recommendations, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Community and Social Services is talking to the folks on the front line. We have been clear that this is something that we are going to act on, and as the Minister of Finance has said, in the run-up to the budget we are preparing to implement the report.

But I really hope that this is an indication that the party opposite is actually going to read the budget and may actually be willing to support us because, Mr. Speaker, you will find, and I hope the member opposite will see in the budget, that there will be that common ground that they will be able to support. I agree with the member opposite: We need to make sure that everyone can take part in our economy and that the very systems that government sets up are not systems that keep people out of the workforce, but in fact support them to get into the workforce and keep them there. That's what we're going to be working on, and I hope the party opposite will read the budget and support us.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Premier: In my riding of Kenora-Rainy River, tourism is a vital part of the economy. Last year this government closed all three of our travel information centres in favour of a travel app that doesn't work in the remote areas of my riding where tourists visit. Now we have signs dotting the highways in these same tourist areas that encourage travel to Manitoba over northwestern Ontario. And it's all at a time when our tourist operators are finding it increasingly difficult to get MTO approval to post their own highway signs along these same stretches of highway.

Speaker, can the Premier explain the strategy and provide statistics that prove that these changes are actually working for Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. Speaker, times have changed, and we have to change with the times. We talk about tourism in the rural areas. It's important to understand we are in the information technology, and many, many people, many tourists, when they come to Ontario, will log on to the website. They will plan for their trip before they even leave their house. It's very important to understand that people are looking at the website. They use their email, and all that planning will be done before they really leave their house to come to Ontario. This is where we are going, and we are committed to enhance our portal. We are committed to strengthening the OTMPC for the portal service to the public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Again to the Premier: Speaker, the Ministry of Tourism claims to have a new strategy respecting travel information centres and tourism in northern Ontario. This strategy evades clear understanding. What we do know is that the OTICs have been

closed, and we do know that the ministry's travel app does not work.

Speaker, can the Premier tell us what the strategy is, or what it's supposed to be, and when are you going to do the right thing and fix it?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, allow me to give you some numbers of last year. In 2012, tourism across Ontario increased. It increased in Niagara Falls, in the Toronto region, in the Ottawa area and in Thunder Bay.

Speaker, the tourism sector is a \$23-billion business, supporting 300,000 jobs.

We have to move on with technology. We have to move on with the website because people look at the website, plan their trip and come to Ontario.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Attorney General.

The week of April 21 to 27 is recognized across Canada as National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. During this time, we are all encouraged to raise awareness in our communities about victims of crime and reflect upon the extraordinary work of those who help them. The theme for this year's National Victims of Crime Awareness Week is: We All Have a Role.

Speaker, in advance of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, can the Attorney General please inform the House on what role our government has played in victims' services?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all thank the hard-working member from Vaughan for his question, because he has been working very hard since he has been here.

We all know that victims of crime play a much larger role in our whole administration of justice system than they ever did before. Over the last 10 years, this government has spent, of our tax dollars, over \$900 million to help victims of crime in the various services that we provide. For example, we spend \$21 million annually on the Victim/Witness Assistance Program, which provides information, assistance and support to victims and witnesses of violent crime during the criminal court process. We've also provided millions of dollars during that period of time to sexual assault and rape crisis centres, and they provide counselling, information and support services to survivors of sexual violence through community-based centres.

Speaker, these are just two examples as to how the money is being spent to make sure that the victims of crime are an integral part of our criminal justice system.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Kitchener-Conestoga has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment concerning eco taxes. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I would like to recognize two recipients of the InterMune IPF Legacy Scholarship program who are here with us today, Ms. Kailyn Gadsby and Ms. Rosemary Crawford.

For those of you who do not know, idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, or IPF for short, is a chronic progressive form of lung disease for which there is currently no known cure or cause. This fatal disease causes swelling and scarring of the air sacs and tissues between the cells of the lungs and affects approximately 5,000 to 8,000 people in Canada.

The IPF legacy scholarship program extends five one-time scholarships of \$2,500 to the students of family members living with IPF.

Kailyn Gadsby is with her family today in the chamber and is following in her mother's footsteps, working at the same agency as her mother did and with some of the same individuals.

Rosemary Crawford is another of the five recipients and is a first-year student at Conestoga College who is passionate about pursuing a career in nursing. Her father was recently diagnosed with IPF but strives to live his life to the fullest. Rosemary plans to continue to follow her father's legacy by working hard in her career and educating people about IPF.

I offer warm congratulations to both recipients of the IPF legacy scholarship, and would also like to remind everyone that on May 6, 2013, the Ontario Lung Association is having their lobby day here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure the member appreciates that I let him go over the time because the two people he introduced are from my riding. Thank you, member.

Mr. Bill Mauro: That's all it takes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's all it takes.

FOOD ASSISTANCE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm proud to rise today to talk about the generosity and spirit of community in my wonderful riding of Essex. Two inspiring groups have taken it upon themselves to help feed the increasing numbers of families that are struggling to make ends meet by rescuing surplus produce from local suppliers that would otherwise end up on the compost heap.

Spearheaded by Tina Quiring and Vern Toews, the Southwestern Ontario Gleaners is an interdenominational group that has embarked on a project to dehydrate rescued food and package that food to be used for instant soups. This healthy food will be distributed through local

school lunch programs and food banks locally in Essex county.

The Gleaners have embarked on a fundraising campaign and have begun to develop their plan. They will need the help of our community, and I am confident they will find that help.

I would also like to mention Plentiful Harvest. Plentiful Harvest is a project supported by the Unemployed Help Centre, Windsor-Essex United Way and local labour groups. They have purchased a refrigerated truck to rescue and preserve food and have also opened a community kitchen to help those in need to prepare this food.

It is a great honour to stand in the Legislature today and thank these groups for identifying a need and rising to the challenge to meet that need.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: This past Friday, April 12, Pathways for Children, Youth and Families of York Region held their first community night walk fundraiser in Richmond Hill to raise awareness of youth homelessness in York region.

Pathways has served my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham and the rest of York region for over 20 years, delivering innovative support programs to improve the lives of homeless and at-risk youth and families. Delivering services in seven languages for over 1,200 families and over 1,800 youth each year, they estimate that there are 300 homeless youth in the York region every night.

For example, Megan came to Pathways in December 2012 when she was facing eviction, unable to work, was in a custody battle for her son, and was living with mental health and addictions issues. With help from a Pathways worker, Megan was able to find adequate housing in York region and enrolled in the Base 4 Success employment program. Megan is now working at her placement in a local retail store, where she is excelling. She has her own place, a job and shared custody of her son.

Thank you, Pathways for Children, Youth and Families of York Region, for raising your lanterns to guide the way home during the night walk, shining a light on the issue of youth homelessness in Oak Ridges–Markham and York region. Your work will help to achieve a fairer society in the province of Ontario.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Neighbour helping neighbour: That's what we saw in Perth–Wellington after the ice storm this past Friday. When that storm knocked out power, people made sure their neighbours were warm. They brought them food and water, and made sure they were okay.

Our municipality set up warming centres in churches and community centres. People could go to get warm, get clean water or recharge their cellphones. Officials took calls from concerned residents. They assessed the dam-

age and coordinated a response. They showed leadership, and we thank them for that.

I also want to thank the dedicated hydro crews, many from our area and many from other places. They worked long hours, and continue to work in some areas, to turn the lights back on.

On Friday afternoon, we received word that North Perth had declared a state of local emergency. It remains in effect. That same afternoon, we emailed the Premier and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. We told them about the power outages, the safety hazards from fallen trees and hydro lines, and property damage. I asked them to respond promptly and favourably to any municipal request.

I want to thank the Minister of Community Safety for calling me. I gave her an update on the situation and asked for her support. I appreciate her concern for the people I represent. I also appreciate the interest shown by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

In times of hardship, we see the character of our communities. In our public works crews, our municipalities and our neighbours, we saw once again that the character of our communities is strong.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to talk about an open letter that all members of the House received on Friday afternoon. The open letter was written by a constituent of someone—I'm not sure whom, because I believe the letter originated in Ottawa—talking about my Bill 49, which is an act to make sure that owners and managers of restaurants and other places cannot take any portion of an employee's tips.

The writer of the open letter to all MPPs talked about the scenario of dine and dash, and he was concerned about whether or not this will be covered under the ambit of my bill. He points out how serious this problem is, because he had to sign a document to continue working. This is a contract from his restaurant: "The bartender/server is responsible for the reimbursement of dine and dashes on your shift. Be aware of your guests at all times." What that means to a server or bartender is that if somebody eats and drinks and then leaves, they are responsible for it.

He wanted to know from my bill, and for other things, whether that would be covered. It's very clear that the law protects people, that their wages can't be taken, but it does allow for dine and dash to be taken away from an employee's tips. That's one of the things we need to do. We need to make sure the same scenario does not unfold in restaurants that unfolded in a gas station earlier this year when a man was killed running after someone who had stolen gas.

Gas and dash, dine and dash: They're both equally bad.

ALFREDO DeGASPERIS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I rise today regarding a solemn occasion, the passing of Mr. Fred DeGasparis.

Mr. DeGasperis was a wonderful Ontarian and Canadian who will be greatly missed by his family, his friends, the land development and construction industry, and the seemingly endless list of charitable organizations he supported generously throughout his life.

Mr. DeGasperis came to Canada from Italy at the age of 18 in the 1950s. Like thousands of others, he came in search of opportunity and in search of a better life for himself and for those closest to him. Through hard work, determination and vision, he, along with his two brothers, built an extensive land development and construction empire that is known across our province and our country today as a leader in innovative community building. His efforts have helped thousands of families across the GTA and beyond realize their dream of owning a home, including those who live in Vellore Village in my riding of Vaughan.

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Mr. DeGasperis had an inherent talent for building physical infrastructure, but he was equally determined to enhance our social infrastructure. For example, the walls of hospitals here in downtown Toronto and in communities virtually right around the GTA include Mr. DeGasperis's name as an individual of unparalleled generosity. He was also a strong supporter of a multitude of other philanthropic and worthwhile causes.

My thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, his children, his grandchildren and his brothers and sisters. I know that Mr. DeGasperis will be missed by people across my riding of Vaughan and beyond. He truly was one of a kind. I stand today to pay tribute to him and his lasting contribution to Ontario.

PLANT CLOSURE

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Last week I was informed that Tender Tootsies, a factory in my riding that specializes in making Canadian-made shoes and boots, will soon be closing its doors for good. Tender Tootsies has been the major employer in the town of Glencoe for generations. They once employed 1,000 men and women. Recently, the company cut back to only 40 employees in an attempt to try to keep this important business alive.

I am deeply saddened by the loss of this iconic local business. They have a long history in my riding and have contributed greatly to our local community: an operation that began with a plant in Glencoe, had 470 employees in 1978, and in its prime grew to over 1,000 employees.

This story of the challenges that manufacturers are facing is one that can be heard right across this province. There are many examples of great men and women who have worked tirelessly to grow their business and contribute to the backbone of Ontario's economy. But it will all go to waste if the government of Ontario continues to fail Ontario businesses.

THUNDER BAY ECONOMY

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm very pleased to stand today and talk about the economy of Thunder Bay, which has been

one of the best in the province for the last three or four years, with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the province for the last three or four years.

There's more good news on the way as we see the forestry sector beginning to rebound very seriously in my riding and all of northern Ontario. As an example, Resolute Forest Products has put on a third shift at their sawmill in Thunder Bay, and Resolute is completing a cogeneration project—about \$60 million that our government helped fund with about \$10 million—that is going to make that pulp and paper mill the lowest-cost operating pulp and paper mill in all of North America in the entire Resolute fleet.

Now, Speaker, there's even more good news. Resolute has very recently announced that they will be building a brand new \$50-million sawmill in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, in or near Atikokan, that will create 90 to 100 new jobs in the mill, plus about 150 in the woodlands operations to support the mill operation. That represents part of about \$170 million in capital investment by Resolute Forest Products over the last one and a half years.

As well, we will be seeing two new pellet mills come on stream very soon, directly connected to the conversion of the Atikokan coal plant from coal burning to biomass—a huge piece, a big job generator in our riding as well.

As I've mentioned, the economy of Thunder Bay continues to grow. It has been one of the best in Ontario for the last three or four years, and these announcements are only going to help to enhance that and further that: very good news for job seekers in the Thunder Bay—Atikokan riding.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to share the concerns of Dufferin—Caledon residents that hydro rates are again being increased by approximately 3% on May 1. Unfortunately, hydro rates have now more than doubled since the Liberal government came to power in 2003.

The number one issue I encounter in my constituency office is the affordability of hydro for families, businesses and manufacturers in Dufferin—Caledon. That message was made clear to me at the recent Orangeville Lions Club Home and Garden Show. At this year's show, I received an overwhelming number of negative comments regarding the continuously increasing costs of hydro. The worst part of it is that the increases are not even reflective of the direct costs of hydro, but instead result from the Liberal government's appalling mismanagement of the energy file—mismanagement like the reckless gas plant cancellations and their stubborn pursuit of deeply flawed green energy experiments like the unsustainable feed-in tariff program.

I recently visited a manufacturer in my riding who shared with me how the high cost of hydro is impacting the decisions they make. This increase will further stifle his ability to reinvest in our community and to create new jobs, jobs that Ontario desperately needs.

Hydro rates have been steadily increasing because consumers are asked to pay for smart meters they never wanted, overpriced energy contracts they cannot afford, money-losing exports they cannot believe, and a debt retirement charge that has already been collected. Ontarians need and expect their power system to be efficient, sustainable and affordable.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning social assistance. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Kenora-Rainy River has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport concerning the tourism strategy in northwestern Ontario. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finally, I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a special report from the Auditor General of Ontario entitled *Mississauga Power Plant Cancellation Costs*, dated April 2013.

PETITIONS

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. John O'Toole: These are petitions from my constituents, and I intend to stand up, as I am now, for them. This is from Amber Mowbray. She's from Bowmanville. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among many breeds or crossbreeds; and

"Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

"The problems of dog attacks are best dealt with through comprehensive programs of education, training and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support Bill 60 (aka Hershey's bill) repealing provincial animal control legislation that is breed-specific and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds."

I sign and support this on behalf of my constituents. Amongst them would be T. Callant and many others.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the NDP member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton has put forward a plan for auto insurance that would dramatically drive up rates for drivers throughout northern Ontario. According to one estimate, drivers in northwestern Ontario could expect to pay 38.8% more in insurance premiums if the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton's proposal is adopted;

"Whereas Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada has said, 'In essence, the bill would force responsible drivers to subsidize the insurance premiums of dangerous drivers';

"Whereas the leader of the third party and the other NDP members of the Legislature have made it clear that they continue to support the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton's proposal for auto insurance reform;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To make it clear that the Legislature does not support the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton's proposal to change auto insurance in Ontario."

I support this petition. I'll put my signature to it and give it to Jack to present to the table. Thank you very much.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

"Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

"Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the" Liberal "job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I will gladly sign this petition.

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CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to introduce this petition, known as the grandparents' rights.

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their grandparents as requested in Bill 48 put forward by" the MPP for Niagara Falls—that's me—

"Whereas currently, subsection 21(1) of the act provides that a parent of a child or any other person"—

Interjections.

Mr. Kim Craitor: Just so you know, I'm being heckled about the grandparents' rights bill; I just want to mention that to you, Mr. Speaker.

—"may apply to a court for certain orders respecting custody OF or access to the child. An amendment to that subsection specifies that a grandparent may apply for such an order; and

"Whereas currently subclause 24(2)(a)(i) of the act provides that where a court makes a determination relating to certain applications in respect of custody of or access to a child, the court shall consider, among other things, the love, affection and emotional ties between the child and each person entitled to or claiming custody of or access to the child. An amendment to that subclause specifies that this includes grandparents; and

"Whereas relationships between children and grandparents are a special bond that should be maintained;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their grandparents."

I'm extremely proud to sign this petition to show my support.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, beginning January 1, 2013, the WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from the WSIB and had private insurance; and

"Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

"Whereas the economy of Ontario is struggling and government must assist businesses in every way possible;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119."

I affix my signature in support.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough-Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough-Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough-Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

"Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough-Agincourt riding; and

"Whereas the commission's report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough-Agincourt community; and

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough-Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety" with its northern Scarborough neighbours;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough-Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough-Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401."

I will give this to Kamryn.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Parkdale-High Park, with an apology; I was distracted and didn't see her start to get up. I will now recognize her out of rotation.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Many thanks, Mr. Speaker. That's so sweet of you.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

"Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

"Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

"Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

"Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a 'custodial' care arrangement; and

"Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

"Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

"(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

"(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

"(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign it and give it to Madeline to be delivered to the table.

CATARACT SURGERY

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, I have more petitions to do with cataract surgeries, from Huntsville and Burk's Falls area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has identified cataract surgery to be a key health service for which it aims to reduce wait times under its Wait Time Strategy; and

"Whereas the current wait time for cataract surgery at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare exceeds the provincial wait time and the provincial target under the Wait Time Strategy; and

"Whereas demand for health services like cataract surgery is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario maintain adequate funding levels to Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare for cataract surgery procedures so that it may reduce wait times for cataract surgery."

Mr. Speaker, I sign this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Good things grow in Ontario

"Whereas the agri-food industry is now, and has historically been, one of the primary economic drivers in Ontario; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario support local processors and producers in Ontario through purchasing and consuming locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables, meat and processed food products; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario farmers and Ontario food producers by leading by example; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario celebrates local Ontario producers and processors and promotes the good things grown, harvested and made in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 36, the Local Food Act."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton Mountain.

Mr. Grant Crack: I support—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you very much.

The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the" McGuinty-Wynne "government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I support it, will sign my name, and send it with page Jack.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

Speaker, I support this petition. I'll sign my name to it and hand it to page Amina.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I have petitions coming in from farm dealerships and construction dealerships across my riding, titled Stop the Tire Tax Hikes.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for farm and construction tires;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

1330 "Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas Ontario's opposition has proposed a plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Suspend the hikes to Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on farm and off-the-road tires pending proposals to lower costs."

I affix my signature.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the agri-food industry is now, and has historically been, one of the primary economic drivers in Ontario; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario support local processors and producers in Ontario through purchasing and consuming locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables, meat and processed food products; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario farmers and Ontario food producers by leading by example; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario celebrates local Ontario producers and processors and promotes the good things grown, harvested and made in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 36, the Local Food Act."

I fully support this, and I give it to page Theodore.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Michael Harris: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the drivers of Ontario, lacking rules of the road for roundabouts in the province of Ontario;

"Whereas the absence of clear guidelines has caused confusion and uncertainty for drivers;

"Whereas the lack of standardized signage and rules for pedestrian right-of-way at crosswalks near roundabouts has led to personal injury;

"Whereas the lack of rules for signalling within a roundabout has caused numerous accidents and damage to vehicles;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately amend the Highway Traffic Act to clarify the use of crosswalks, and proper signalling for the entrance, traversing and exiting of vehicles from roundabouts."

I support this petition wholeheartedly, and I'll send it down with Callum to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 11, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak today, and I look forward to discussing some aspects. It's nice to see the minister in attendance today.

We're dealing with Bill 11, and I'm sure there's been a lot of discussion about this. I know the government House leader will probably go into great detail about the amount of time spoken about this bill, but there are a number of aspects that I want to bring to light that probably weren't brought into a number of other debates in the past.

Obviously, the bill provides cabinet with the power to appoint provincial representatives to sit on boards of designated air ambulance providers, of which Ornge is one of the listed ones. There was a number of aspects in there that caused concerns, and I think one of the key areas was the weakness in the structure of the air ambulance situation. It doesn't address the oversight that should be given to the Ministry of Health to ensure that everything is done in regards to that.

In my own personal experience and my first time dealing with Ornge, I was just driving north on the highway just south of Kinmount—actually, my wife was driving—and, lo and behold, a motorcycle had pulled out in front of us, into ongoing traffic. What happened was, a truck pulled right into the oncoming traffic and had a head-on collision with the motorcycle.

We were the first on the scene. The driver of the truck couldn't believe what the individual had done. There was a female lying unconscious in the ditch, as well as a male who appeared to have a broken arm and broken leg and was bleeding profusely from underneath his jacket and his helmet. We took immediate control of the situation, called 911, and got a great response from the OPP at that particular time, and they flew in.

Upon arriving on the scene, the OPP immediately assessed the situation and called Ornge in. It was good to see the individuals come in. They did a great job landing in a local farmer's field, where they opened the field and proceeded to remove the individuals. By now the female had regained consciousness and seemed to be doing fairly well. Thankfully, I checked in later to find out that the individuals were doing great.

But there are many other aspects of Ornge that we don't hear about. It was great to see the individuals—the OPP showed great respect. I remember the OPP officer saying, "Our job is a great job," and he very much enjoyed it, but he thought the air ambulance was the coolest, that these individuals really did a great job and helped out.

But there are some other problems there that haven't been mentioned. There needs to be some oversight to ensure there's a coordinated effort between the land ambulance and the air ambulance. I know that many members have heard about the problems that have taken place locally in Oshawa; for example, delivery to the local Oshawa airport and then waiting. They waited and they waited and they waited. The local ambulance told me that in the time they were waiting, they would have been able to deliver the individual to the target hospital in Toronto.

The difficulty there was that while they were waiting—the air Ornge finally showed up and they proceeded on the flight, but they had waited so long that they ran out of medication for the individual on the plane and had to stop further in the region of Durham to get another supply of medication to assist the patient who was being transported to Toronto.

We need to ensure there's oversight over some of these things, making sure individuals are well taken care

of—it's in the best interests. I mean, coordinated effort between the two doesn't appear to be so, and I want to make sure this takes place in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Simcoe–Grey, as a former minister, has certain experience in knowing how to manage these files. In his opening remarks, he spoke about the fact that what had taken place with this bill and the previous bill seemed very much like Groundhog Day. Some of the difficulty there is that in Groundhog Day, for those who recall, Bill Murray certainly matured into a different individual. He gained great capacity, he was able to change and to modify his ability to play the piano, do an ice sculpture and everything else, and was substantially different. So I don't necessarily agree with the member from Simcoe–Grey, in that what we're seeing once again is very much like Groundhog Day. There is no change, there is no maturation of what has taken place in the legislation to ensure that all those problem areas are taken care of.

Now, one of the other aspects I wanted to bring forward, Mr. Speaker, is that, very much as in Groundhog Day, we try to learn from our mistakes in how we move forward with this. I want to bring forward a different perspective on this legislation potentially and what has taken place in mistakes in the past. If you look at what took place with eHealth, we had an individual who came forward, and guess what? We had Minister Smitherman, who actually left the Legislature before anything was brought forward. Then what took place was that Minister Caplan came forward as Minister of Health during the eHealth scandal. I happened to sit on public accounts and, lo and behold, Minister Caplan had to step down.

Now we are learning that some things happened that we don't necessarily want to unfold in the same manner. What took place afterwards was something that I think the current government wants to make sure does not happen once again. If you look at the record of Mr. Caplan at that particular time, once he left cabinet, our understanding was that there was some assurance he would be placed back in; he was only temporarily removed. When other individuals came forward, moving into cabinet prior to him coming back, which never happened, I think he was rather upset with the system and the way the system failed that particular individual, at least the way that minister thought the system failed that individual.

What was the end result? The end result was that there were 13 new pieces of legislation, private members' bills introduced by that particular individual. I certainly think the government has learned, "You know something? When these sorts of things happen, we want to make sure it doesn't happen again in the same fashion." We want to make sure we deal with this issue without upsetting somebody or having these sorts of things. How you manage a file is something that government looks at.

Certainly what has taken place—and my perspective as well—is that we need a public perception that we're taking care of the problems in the legislation out there. We need to address this legislation. But quite frankly,

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the legislation, there was already protection in there. The minister had the ability to have somebody come in and do an assessment, very specifically under two sections. In two sections of the legislation there was the ability for the minister to step in. Let me see here; I could probably quote those. There were two other areas through the legislation. The minister through the performance agreement was one specific area. Article 15 of the original performance agreement gave the minister the ability to come forward and to review or enact to ensure that everything was taken care of, as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act. Between the Independent Health Facilities Act and article 15 of the performance agreement, the minister had clear ability to come forward and ensure that something was being done.

1340

If we're going to bring forward legislation that talks about making sure that everything is fixed and right, why would we bring forward legislation when there was already legislation in place that the minister didn't act upon? That causes us some concern. We want to make sure that it's just not a perception that we're going forward to minimize the impact or how it's unfolded at later dates on the Legislature and how individuals react—so that we're bringing forward legislation that's going to have some ability.

Some of the other key areas that have some strong concern are that the bill does not provide cross-the-board protection for whistle-blowers. We want to make sure—and if there's any doubt in any way, shape or form, why would an individual come forward and say that they have problems with this or they want to be protected? If there's not clear and across-the-board protection, then individuals would have a reluctance to talk about those sorts of aspects.

In the same fashion that I spoke about the land ambulance and the air ambulance problems with Ornge, there's no coordinated effort of, who's in charge in handling what and how do you assess and how do you review to make sure that these things don't happen? Yes, as new systems come into place—but this one has been around for some time—there are going to be some growing pains, but I certainly believe that there needs to be some fashion that they can look at this and make sure that the two are coordinated and working quite effectively together.

The other aspect we spoke about is the clear concern of how we manage an issue that has come forward and is causing difficulty, as took place with eHealth. We had a minister resign, we had a minister leave, and we had a deputy minister step down. Now we have that same public accounts reviewing that. We're not getting the same response, quite frankly, because it could be the way that the individual who stepped down and still remained in the Legislature was in the Legislature.

We want to move forward with this legislation, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that it's in the best interests in providing adequate protections for individuals, for whistle-

blowers to come forward, and to make sure that when they speak, they are protected so that nothing can come back and haunt them at a later date.

That basically concludes a couple of the key points that are different from anything that I've heard in this Legislature. I just hope we can move forward with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I listened with interest to the member from Oshawa's remarks. I was a fan of the movie *Groundhog Day* when I was a child, although I'm less a fan of the remake here in the Legislature. I found the original much funnier, and it had less repercussions for the people of Ontario, obviously.

At this point, I'm hoping that this debate is going to wind down. I know that the people in Davenport continue to ask when the budget is going to be released. I'd like to know that. We know that, finally, there has been a committee struck on this issue, after almost a year and a half where nobody was asked for their opinions about the budgeting parties for this government, but we have still not heard from this government when this budget will come down.

Nevertheless, we did hear from the People's Budget earlier today, and they set out some priorities that I think are important for people to hear. They went around and listened to people across Ontario. They said:

"(1) Austerity is failing the people in this province, particularly our most vulnerable citizens.

"(2) Ontarians want to live in a fair society.

"(3) Government can do a better job of supporting Ontarians to realize their full potential."

They recommend a number of things, from increasing the minimum wage to establishing an infrastructure fund, to implementing a fair taxation package. This is the kind of thing that makes good sense to me, and I think that the people are far in front of the government on this issue.

Speaker, rather than take up any more time here today on Bill 11, which has surely been debated to death, I would just like to say, please, let's get on with this, let's get to the budget, and let's see what happens next.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: We had valuable input from the member from Oshawa, a member of the public accounts committee.

In fact, the public accounts committee is continuing their work. This debate is far from over. We're hearing from two Ornge executives on Wednesday: Bruce Farr, vice-president, operations, and Denise Polgar, patient advocate.

The member from Oshawa, the former Minister of Natural Resources—I spent time as a parliamentary assistant to natural resources. The province of Ontario does have a good handle on airplanes and helicopters, particularly in the north, and the businesses that have run that over many, many years. Our committee received a letter from the Ontario Air Transport Association,

December 23, 2011. They indicated that Ornge “is not underfunded; there has been a complete loss of accountability....” They feel that “firing a few key executives or ‘tightening up the performance agreement’ does not fix the fundamentally flawed system that the government has put in place.”

On a positive note, they have some recommendations:

“(1) That Ornge”—the name—“be changed to ‘Ontario Air Ambulance.’”

“(2) Ornge should not be in the ‘airline’ business. The supply and operation of fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters should [be] tendered in an open and competitive bidding process.

“(3) Ornge’s mandate must be limited to”: operating the dispatch centre; base hospital functions; training and certification of flight paramedics; administration of contracts for services with air carriers including ongoing inspections and audits; and that other related activities should be returned to the Ministry of Natural Resources’ provincial air service.

I’ll vote for that. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments? The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I’m happy to see the end of this debate coming very clear, and us being able to move this forward into committee, where we can make changes that we’ve been asking for. We were prorogued for four months when this bill came forward the first time. It’s before us again for a second time.

The first time this bill was being read, before prorogation, we were asking for the Ombudsman oversight. During the four months that we were prorogued nothing has changed in this bill that’s before us today again. So we’re hopeful that when we get to committee we will be able to convince the other people of this House that Ombudsman oversight for air ambulance is appropriate and move it forward.

I, like my colleague from Davenport, would love to be doing other things in this House. We’re looking forward to seeing a budget come from the government. We’re looking forward to digging down deep into that and seeing what it will be bringing for the people of our ridings. I know my riding is very excited to see that budget being tabled.

There are so many concerns happening across this province that the Ombudsman would be able to dig his teeth into. It’s really unfortunate that the government continues to wedge that oversight and that accountability and that investigation that could be used over and over again. We’ve heard how many scandals and how many issues that have been brought to life just in the short time that I have been here, and how many times have we been calling on him and he’s been completely shut out? So I’ll look forward to that happening. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment. I look to the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I want to acknowledge the wonderful member from Thornhill, who is always present in the House and always doing wonderful input, especially during question period. I know that he will be supporting this piece of legislation as he himself and the members on his side are anxious to see that the bill proceeds so indeed we can do it better when it comes back to the House.

As the last speaker was saying, I think we’ve had 17, 18, 19 or 20 hours of debate. I think everyone has said what we all want to say. No one is running away from making sure that the bill will continue to have a consultation at the committee level. But this will not happen unless we get the bill out of the House and we send it to committee. I would say to all the members of the House, and especially those that will be sitting at the committee level, to pay attention indeed to the content of this particular bill. I think it does contain some good guidelines, good recommendations. If they wish to amend it and bring more recommendations, by all means, I think they should be dealt with, looked after, and debated at the committee level. When the bill comes back, I hope that, again, it will come back in such a form that all the members of the House can support it.

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Speaker, one of the main recommendations included in the bill as it is now is to deal exactly with some of the concerns the members have expressed in the House. This will not happen, Speaker—I know you agree—unless we get the bill out of here. Indeed, let’s bring it out into the open. Let’s debate it. We’ll leave it to the members of the committee to bring it back, bring it better, so we can support it and move along. I thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments, and so I return to the member for Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the comments from the member from Davenport, who mentioned again about Groundhog Day and Bill Murray and what has taken place there, but then went on to speak about the budget; the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, who’s also doing a great job on the public accounts committee and how the Ministry of Natural Resources should take over responsibility for the helicopters and the fixed-wing planes, to ensure that that fleet remains strong and continues on in the best interests, because there’s some definite oversight within that industry. The member from Hamilton Mountain spoke about moving forward, and the minister for seniors, as well, made some comments on that.

Some of the aspects, I think, were that we need to ensure that we move forward in a positive way and look at all the debate that has come forward; to ensure that the link between the ground and the air is taken care of; the whistle-blower protection, along with the other aspects that are there; and that legislation, when it comes forward, when it’s finalized, is acted on when there’s difficulties and problems.

Government is given the privilege and honour to represent the people. It’s who they bring to the table and

how they manage those files that dictates what is in the best interests of the province. Quite frankly, we've seen a number of things, whether it's power plants and eHealth and right here with Ornge, that have taken place.

To the government House leader, I just want to say one thing in closing: Finally, I was given the opportunity to speak, so as of now, now that I've had my opportunity to speak, I'm going to say that we're going to move forward now, and we're now moving to the next stage of this. We want to advance this to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a request for a deferral until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes, and it's signed by the chief government whip.

This vote will be deferred.

Second reading vote deferred.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING
CO-OPERATIVES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT
SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 20, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 14, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this bill, we heard from the Minister of Labour. The minister is present in the House, so we now go to questions and comments with respect to the Minister of Labour's remarks from March 20. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can't recall the Minister of Labour's comments, but I'm sure they would have been suitably partisan. Myself, on the other hand—we don't deal in that respect. We're dealing with the bill here, the co-operative housing bill, and I want to thank Harvey Cooper and his folks for coming here once again.

They're like season ticketholders to the Ontario Legislature. They keep track of when the debate is going on and they faithfully attend, because it's an issue that is of significant interest to them, and they've shown that in their attendance here today and on all days that the debate has been going on in the House.

As we've talked about in the past on this bill, there are a couple of key provisions. It would allow the parties to settle these things outside of going to court, through a mediator, because we know those things can be very expensive. They can deal with disputes between landlords and tenants in co-operative housing facilities in a much more efficient manner than what is currently the case. Our party has consistently said during the debate that we would be supporting this legislation, but at the same time we wanted to give all members an opportunity to debate it to the full extent as well. We believe that we're on the way to that. We do have other members who do wish to speak to this bill, and we think we'll have an opportunity to hear from them today, as is their right. It is our decision as a caucus to allow them to exercise that right. We're looking forward to more debate today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I welcome our guests back to the gallery. They've been here many days in the last few months, and I think I've spoken to this bill many times. As you know, I'm a big supporter of co-operative housing. It's something that we need more of. I support this bill in making things a bit easier for co-operative housing tenants, but as I said before, this is just a small piece in the puzzle when it comes to affordable housing in Ontario.

Just today, the Ontario Federation of Labour produced the People's Budget for Ontario. These are some of the statistics that they put out: They said that 40% of Ontarians—that's over 600,000 families—are struggling with incomes that are stagnant or declining and that Ontario's poverty rates are rising faster than in almost every other province. They said that between 1981 and 2010, Ontario had the second-highest increase in poverty in the country, and they said that with more than 152,000 Ontario households on wait-lists for assisted housing, Ontario has the worst record of all provinces on affordable housing investments. In 2009, Ontario spent \$64 per person on affordable housing, compared to the average among all provinces of \$115 per person. That source is attributed to Michael Shapcott of the Wellesley Institute.

It's clear that there's so much more that needs to be done when it comes to affordable housing. It's also clear that we've had full debate on this bill. We should put it into committee for a closer look. That's my recommendation here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very pleased to stand and provide some comments on the speech that my colleague the Minister of Labour made the last time we met on this bill. I congratulate him for his insights into this very

important issue. Like every member of this Legislature, we have had at least one visit, if not multiple, visits from Harvey Cooper and his team, and we welcome Harvey here today.

I've certainly been a great proponent of co-operative housing in my community. I've had a chance to meet with those who operate and manage co-operative housing units, as well as actually visit the residences themselves and gain a better understanding of it. Of course, what this bill does is provide strengthening to the act and allow it to progress.

The wonderful thing about this bill—and again I give kudos to Mr. Cooper and his team—is that it has support from virtually every member of provincial Parliament who's here in this Legislature.

1400

On that note, I just want to pick up what was said by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke when he talked about the right of every member to speak to a bill. Of course, I certainly recognize and respect that right, but I would also point out that, the way the standing orders have been developed in the traditions of this place, arguments are made through a vigorous debate. At the point when those arguments are exhausted, it usually moves on to the next phase. We just, thankfully, finished second reading on Bill 11, and I think devoted over 19 hours to debate. Particularly on a bill like this, which I think is very straightforward and has support on all sides of the House, I would certainly encourage those members who wish to speak to make the arguments, to put them, in a sense, on the floor of this House, and we can move this bill on to second reading as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today in support of Bill 14 and the fact that this is about protecting the tenants; but more importantly, Mr. Speaker, it's the right thing to do.

When you look at this bill, everybody across has said that they support this. The House leader just commented on the fact that we cannot continue to belabour this whole conversation here in the House when the real work, we know from past experience, was discussed in second reading prior to prorogation of the House.

At the end of the day, the community, the people of Ontario, want this bill. We know, from our conversation with Harvey Cooper and his dedicated members from co-op housing—they have asked us, and the community has asked us, to address this issue. Without further complicating it and further debate on this issue, let's go out and talk, through the committee, to fine-tune or improve what's been proposed by the minister. We need to recognize the fact that we cannot continue to have continuous debate like we just finished with the air ambulance legislation. More importantly, let's go do the committee work so that it can come back to the House for final reading.

I do recognize the member from Renfrew and his comment about having proper debate in the House, but at the end of the day, it does not get this bill passed. That's

what Ontarians have asked us to do: to have legislation to move forward, to protect everyone, both the tenants and the landlords. At the end of the day, we also have to recognize that Ontarians sent us here to get things done. Getting things done is not just having continuous conversation for the sake of hearing each other, but making sure legislation is being passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments time. I return to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to respond to the comments of the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the member from Davenport, the government House leader and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

For those of the members who can recall what I spoke about for 20 minutes when I spoke on this very important bill, Bill 14, I took the opportunity to support the bill because I think it's extremely important, and I'm very happy to hear that support exists across the Legislature. But I also spoke about the bill in terms of my community, where I have heard from many of my constituents who live in co-operative housing that this is going to improve the operation and administration of co-op housing in my community of Ottawa Centre.

In addition, I spoke about the 12 housing co-operatives that exist in my riding of Ottawa Centre, and I took some time going through every single one of them because I had the opportunity to work with them all and see how great places they are to live in, to grow a family, to build a community. I wanted to make sure that in the House we have a bit of an appreciation from a community like mine in Ottawa Centre as to the kind of excellent co-op housing that exists. Through this bill, we can help them improve them even further.

Lastly, I thank the Co-op Housing Association of Eastern Ontario, CHASEO, which is a vibrant organization in Ottawa which represents both English-speaking and French-speaking and operated co-op housing across eastern Ontario, and the incredible work that they're doing in providing co-op housing as a good alternative to affordable housing in our community.

Speaker, I echo the government House leader and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt: This is an important bill. Let's get this debate done with quickly, so that we can take this matter to committee and have it pass as quickly as possible to help our co-op housing across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we wish the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 14, the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act. Before I begin, I would like to thank Minister Jeffrey for quickly reintroducing Bill 14. I would also like to thank the Premier—the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—for introducing this bill last session. Back then it was called Bill 65, and many of the members of this House rose to speak to it.

It's a shame—such a shame—that this bill had to be reintroduced. At the time, Bill 65 had all-party support. It was a non-partisan bill that had to start all over again for the most partisan of reasons. A good number of other bills were sent back to square one, including my own private member's bill that was aimed at cutting through red tape and even helping Ontario business owners. The good people of Chatham-Kent-Essex sent me here to work for them, and that's exactly what I'm doing.

I would like to thank Harvey Cooper and his team at the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. Harvey is the manager of government relations for the co-ops, and he appears to have the patience of a saint. Mr. Speaker, you can see the determination of these folks and just how much this bill means to them. They've been waiting for this piece of legislation since this government made a promise of it back in 2007.

I know that things move a little slowly here at Queen's Park, but this is shameful. Even after seeing the bill get killed at the hands of Dalton McGuinty's reckless prorogation, Mr. Cooper remains upbeat. He recently stated that he and the co-ops of Ontario "hope the bill can move quickly through second and third reading. As we know, the minority Legislature can be a tricky place and we will work with the parties to try to get quick passage of the legislation." I hope he's right, and let's hope that more Liberal scandals don't get in the way of good, sensible legislation. As a party, we support the bill, but we have some concerns over amendments that were added to this bill.

Before discussing Bill 14, I feel it is important to highlight exactly what a co-op is. There are often misconceptions about co-ops, and many people are unaware of just how significant they are in the affordable housing mix. Housing co-operatives provide not-for-profit housing for their members. The members do not own equity in their housing. This means that if they move, their home is returned to the co-op to be offered to yet another individual or family that needs affordable income—sorry, an affordable home. They may need that, too. Because co-ops charge their members only enough to cover costs for repairs and reserves, they can offer housing that is often more affordable than rental prices elsewhere in the housing market.

Speaker, I don't know whether you're aware of this, but roughly 125,000 people live in more than 550 non-profit housing co-operatives across Ontario. Amazingly, there are co-ops in 95 of the province's 107 ridings. With

co-ops in so many ridings, this is not just an urban issue; it impacts many rural municipalities as well. In my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, there are, in fact, three co-ops in Chatham and another in the municipality of Leamington. Each of these residences has anywhere between 45 and 60 units. These are mainstays of the community, and provide a safe, welcoming community for residents to live and grow.

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The Clairvue co-op in the north end of Chatham, for example, has 60 units, and the members who live there are the ones responsible for running the co-op. Each member has a vote, and every year members elect a board of directors from the membership. This co-op is an important part of the community, and keeping it safe and vibrant is integral to the development of Chatham-Kent. It is an ongoing part of the town that includes Gregory Drive Public School, one of the top-rated public schools in our fair city. It also is across the street from the newly installed multi-million-dollar family splash pads at Kingston Park.

As you can see, this bill, by strengthening co-ops, will strengthen family life and community within Chatham-Kent.

Again, I would like to highlight that this issue is not simply an urban issue. This affects even rural ridings like my own. The court systems in Chatham-Kent-Essex are overburdened, like they are all over this province, and co-ops like the Mariner's co-op in Leamington need a quick and efficient way to settle internal disputes without backing up the courts. The Mariner's co-op is home to 50 residential units, and helping to pass this bill would give those residents the peace of mind they need. They need to know that their disputes will be, in fact, solved as efficiently as possible through the Landlord and Tenant Board, and not through the costly and time-consuming efforts of courts.

Beyond both the Clairvue and Mariner's co-ops, my riding is also proud to have the Nova Housing Co-op, located on Turquoise Court in Chatham, and the Labourview Housing Co-op on King Street. These groups are integral aspects of the community that need to be preserved. They provide affordable housing to the region at a better bang for the buck for Ontario taxpayers. These housing options provide affordable and secure options to members of the Chatham-Kent-Essex community.

Given that co-operative housing is such an important part of the non-profit housing mix in this province, and also in my riding, it's our job as legislators to make sure that the government is here to help and not hinder them. Bill 14 features some mechanisms that will make it easier for co-ops to function.

This bill would enact a simple change that stakeholders have been trying to see realized for many years. The residents of housing co-ops in this province are asking to be treated like any other tenant and have their cases heard by the Landlord and Tenant Board instead of waiting and paying large fees to have their disputes brought before the courts. At its core, this legislation makes sense.

It also, by the way, makes dollars and cents. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing estimated that the cost of resolving these co-op disputes in the courts is between \$3,000 and \$5,000 each. Further, they stated that the approximately 300 cases that are heard each year amount to annual legal costs to affected co-op members of about \$1 million. Now, \$1 million may not sound like much to the members—it certainly isn't as costly as a gas plant—but that's a lot of money.

These disputes, however, include rent arrears, late payment of rent, wilful damage, and illegal activity by tenants or interfering with other tenants' enjoyment of their property. These cases do not belong in the courts; they belong in the Landlord and Tenant Board. Let's get this bill to committee so we can get this logical and practical change made. We need to make every effort possible to relieve our overburdened court system. I'm sure that the Attorney General knows exactly how dire the situation is for our court system right here in the great province of Ontario. It is certainly a complex issue, but removing 300 cases a year will certainly help.

I'd like to take a moment and explain just how serious this situation is in our province. After all, what's the use of passing laws if we don't have a judicial system that can keep up?

In October of 2012, Justice Stephen Brown claimed that Ontario courthouses are "slipping further into a crisis situation" because of growing demands and limited resources. He made this statement in a written decision in which he stayed charges against a man accused of impaired driving because the case experienced too many delays in the court.

In addition to withdrawn or stayed cases, there is the matter of increased costs for the province that must be addressed.

I view our PC Party as the wallet watchers of Ontario, and any way that we can lower costs and minimize any liability on Ontario taxpayers—that's why I believe I've been put in this position in Chatham-Kent-Essex, to best represent the taxpayers there. All of us need to be thinking along the same lines.

There are also unnecessary costs when cases drag through the system. These delayed cases also swallow up precious court resources, from judges and lawyers to security and even courtroom staff. These inflated court costs certainly hurt the province, but they also hurt families in the co-ops.

This bill should already be law; however, the delay has cost co-op members potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars in unnecessary court costs as the rules the bill was intended to fix still remain in place. You would say, "Well, why is that?" I'd just like to remind those at home it had everything to do with the prorogation, and as a result of that it continues to cost. Now we're back, but this should have been settled back when it was first introduced.

This is their third attempt at passing this bill; I hope the third time is a charm. I remind the House that this promise was originally made back in—yes—2007. Now,

if my memory is correct, 2007 was, like, two elections ago, or just before two elections ago. That was two Speakers and a Premier ago. Can you believe it? A lot has changed in that time period.

What has remained unchanged is the unwavering commitment of folks like Harvey Cooper and the many housing co-op volunteers who have travelled to Queen's Park session after session trying to see this bill become a law.

Another element that has not changed is the support of the PC Party on this issue. I'd like to thank our municipal affairs and housing critic, Steve Clark, MPP for Leeds-Grenville and former mayor of Brockville, for providing a wealth of knowledge on this subject to our caucus. He works tirelessly for his constituents and is, in fact, an authority on the housing file.

The member from Leeds-Grenville did point out something troubling to me about this bill. The new bill contains an amendment to allow the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive the \$45 filing fee for low-income tenants. This may sound nice at first, but as legislators it's our duty to consider the unintended impacts of even the smallest amendment. It's my understanding that the fee would be returned to the tenant if they are successful at the board. Well, what we're concerned about is the potential for abuse to an already backlogged board. This amendment has the potential to harm both landlords and tenants, as their legitimate cases could be held up by nuisance complaints clogging the system. It will harm all involved as it will further hamper the Landlord and Tenant Board's ability to hear cases in a timely manner. Let's ensure that the mechanisms in place to resolve legitimate issues are there for those who really need them. No one wants to wait for many months or even years to resolve a housing issue.

If I were a resident in a co-op waiting for my case to be heard, for example a case where another tenant is interfering with my enjoyment of the property, I would not want to have to wait and wait for my dispute to be resolved. I would want closure on the issue so I could move forward.

1420

We're afraid that this tacked-on charge could do more harm than the government may have realized. This is a conversation that we need to have with the people from co-operative housing in Ontario. In a spirit of collaboration, let's talk about the ways we can reduce the barriers for people but also keep safeguards in place to avoid the potential for nuisance complaints from both sides, bogging down an already burdened Landlord and Tenant Board. Adding this amendment without consultation is not the right thing to do.

Let me state that there was absolutely no reason to amend the former bill in the first place. It had all-party support. The bill was well on its way to being passed, so why throw in unnecessary and unneeded amendments? It's not every day that the members of the third party opposition and I agree on something. It's even rarer that the government also supports such a bill. But why not re-

introduce the bill as it was when it had received all-party support? If we're going to start making changes to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Landlord and Tenant Board overall, I think it would be prudent to consult with stakeholders, landlords and tenants. If the government really wants to open up the Residential Tenancies Act, why not make some truly substantial changes? I'm sure we have all received calls from constituents who have had an issue with the Landlord and Tenant Board. It's far from being perfect and could surely stand to be improved. Let's consult with stakeholder groups who have had so many constructive things to say over this entire process.

At the end of the day, Bill 14 was not introduced exactly as it was in the previous session. While, as I outlined, I have some concerns over the finer points, I'm happy to support Bill 14 at second reading. But it's absolutely vital that this long-overdue bill finally becomes law. For the residents of Mariner's housing co-operative in Leamington, and for the Clairvue, Labourview and Nova housing co-operatives in the great, outstanding riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, I support this bill. I hope that we can give them the peace of mind that their disputes will not force them into the messy court system. I believe that this is absolutely essential.

It's also essential that we make sure that there is a thorough review process in committee that will ensure that we craft a solid piece of legislation and leave nothing to chance. We must be accountable. That may be a word that the government may not fully understand, but we'll work together to ensure that collectively we will be accountable to the Ontarians who rely on the Landlord and Tenant Board by making sure it is there for them when called upon.

So let's be thoughtful. Let's be responsible. I truly believe that that's why each and every one of us is here: to make sure that every law we pass has the best interests of our constituents and all citizens of this great province in mind. We must make sure that this bill truly reflects the desires of those living in co-ops, from Chatham to Toronto to Thunder Bay. We owe it to the 125,000 Ontarians who live in this province's 550 non-profit housing co-ops to make sure that we get it right after all this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to start off by thanking the co-op people for bearing through this, time and time again. I'm considering putting you in for the Order of Canada for all the time you've spent here. It's almost like we could get you a chair and you could be a member here, it's been so long and overdue for you.

This will be a quicker system, obviously, eliminating the court system, which always is bogged down at the best of times. It doesn't matter if it's criminal law; it doesn't matter if it's civic-municipal law. It's always bogged down. Months and months transpire between decisions, which should be quick and effective, especially if you're having a dispute in your living conditions, in the place you live.

It provides tenants with more timely decisions, which will obviously correct disputes which could be between tenants themselves. It could be between the buildings they live in, and it also could be between their boards. It could be between contractors who are doing work for the building. Whatever the decisions are, the problems they're having will be dealt with with people who are familiar with this. The board has dealt with this many times. Many, many years they've been there, and they're familiar with the ups and downs of co-ops or rental situations. Whatever they've been dealing with, they have the expertise to speed up the process.

Of course, we don't want to forget the legal costs that are involved sometimes that cost a fortune. These, obviously, will be diminished or may be almost non-existent, which is very important to any organization that's dealing with these types of situations.

Bill 14 is a good thing. It's long overdue. It appears that all parties are on board. In closing, all I can say is, let's get on with it, let's get it done and make Ontario a better place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I came into politics through volunteer work in the affordable housing system. I'm pleased to join the debate today on behalf of the many co-op housing projects in my community. I'm going to name a few because I cannot recall every name, but I know that I have—when we were talking about the number of co-op providers, I thought that most of them are in my riding. I wanted to speak on behalf of the residents in co-op housing and the management on the boards of Brébeuf, LaSalle, Desloges, Giovanni, Beausoleil, and then I can go on about all those in Sandy Hill. I speak on behalf of them wanting this bill to pass.

Currently, disputes must go through the courts. We have heard that it's very costly and time-consuming. If passed, this bill will allow co-op boards to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to resolve their disputes at a cheaper price than when they go through the courts. This will make the resolution of disputes more efficient, cost-effective and transparent for co-op boards and their members.

I'm still asking the question: Why are we still debating it today? We've heard from the opposition that it takes time and "We want this bill to pass." If we want this bill to pass, let's send it to committee.

So I thank you for being here, because if you were not here, perhaps there would be a lot of opposition about Bill 14. But because you're here, they're all supporting it, so keep coming.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex, who researches these items very well and articulates them extremely clearly.

I almost want to start off by saying maybe this bill should be renamed the "patience of Job act," in recognition of Harvey Cooper and his housing colleagues.

You know, it was 2007 when this was first brought here. Why is this not already enacted and serving the great people of Ontario who need it the most? It just baffles me, particularly when we look at it, that there's all-party support. Despite all of that, we're back here having another discussion. I think my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—I got it right; I could be a Speaker someday. He has brought up again that if the Liberal Party didn't prorogue the House for four months, this could have again been enacted the last time and actually helping and benefiting the great people of Ontario.

I'm really pleased to see that it's getting it out of the court system, because our courts are backlogged to begin with. We need to be opening those up. It's less costly to go down this road, but I do have a major concern. There's nothing I can see in the act currently that will ensure there aren't nuisance complaints that are going to just actually inundate the board, and thus those people who really need a hearing won't get to the forefront and get their issues resolved.

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I agree with my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex that strengthening the family life in all communities is absolutely imperative. We're very supportive of that. But I think what we want to do with this legislation—like all legislation, it needs to be balanced. We should have consulted all stakeholders at the very first and not, as in many cases with the Liberals, run something out the door and then go, "Oh, jeez, we should have thought of that. Yeah, we'll come back." Then we look like a hero because we've actually made it a more palatable piece of legislation.

Why can't we just get all three parties at the start like we've agreed, do this legislation the right way on behalf of the province of Ontario and the taxpayers, the people who are paying the freight and give us the privilege and pleasure to be here, and do things right? This could have been enacted in 2007. Let's get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I would also like to welcome back Harvey and his co-op crew. They have definitely been diligent in trying to ensure that this bill passes through.

It is quite shameful that it has been before this House since 2007. This is important legislation that needs to go through to support the people of our province. It's unfortunate that it's here time and time and time again.

To speak to the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex and his concern about the changes to the legislation that would allow low-income families to have a waiver of the fees, that concerns me. We should be making sure that low-income people have the same abilities. They're having a hard enough time keeping the lights on and food in the fridge. When they're in tough times and they can't pay the rent and they are being evicted, they obviously need the extra help to be able to ensure that they have the ability to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board and be able to fight for their rights also.

I am happy to hear, though, that he and his party are looking forward to working together to make sure that we are getting legislation forward. I hope that counts when it comes to the budget and that they will be looking at the budget and seeing if there are good things in the budget for the people of this province and will be able to move some of that forward also.

I'm sure that the government would like to enact some of their ideas as well as they would ours. Hopefully, they're not as what we've seen come through when it comes to beating up on people of this province, and instead of a race to the bottom, we have a race to the top.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments. I return to the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex for his reply.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: First of all, I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—just an outstanding ice hockey referee; the Minister of Community Safety, whose riding is Ottawa–Vanier; the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; and of course the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Back in our riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, we do have, in fact, three co-ops in Chatham and one in Leamington. I know that they're looking forward to seeing this particular bill pass, the legislation.

Currently, it is costly. If we roll the clock back from when it was first introduced in 2007 to now, a lot of time and a lot of money has kind of been spent and wasted where it could have been better spent in other areas.

Again, I want to encourage members from all parties: Let's get it right this time. Let's approve this particular bill. Let's get it out of the courts and let's get it into the hands of the Landlord and Tenant Board. This is Bill 14. It was formerly Bill 65.

I do have some concerns about nuisance complaints that may in fact tie up the Landlord and Tenant Board. It may be something where, when we get it back into committee, we'll have an opportunity to perhaps tighten up some of those loose ends.

The member from Hamilton Mountain, though, did in fact comment about the budget. Of course, I would like to remind her that we won't be sitting on our hands this time when it comes to the budget. Just by virtue of her words, I'm wondering if the C-word—yes, Speaker, the coalition—is alive and well. We're wondering that as well.

But having said all of that, moving forward, we will be supporting Bill 14.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed an honour to stand today to speak about this bill. I have tried to speak about it before and I will continue to speak about it until it eventually becomes law. With any luck, it will be long on its way by tonight. I promised the people who've been spoken about, many times, that hopefully by tonight we will have exhausted the number of people who actually want to speak to this and can send it to committee.

There are 550 co-ops in the province of Ontario and a great number of them are in my riding. When I talk to

people about the co-ops in my riding and the ones that I'm most familiar with—those being the ones from East York from the time when I was mayor—I always tell the same kind of stories about the families who live there and about the co-ops and how you can distinguish a co-op from an apartment building. How you can distinguish them is very simple. The co-op generally tends to be the one that has the nicest lawns, the best upkeep, the ones with the least problems, the ones where the residents are proud to live there, where there is maintenance and where the money is spent to maintain them at all times. That's how you can tell the co-ops from some of the rental units that you find in and around East York and Toronto.

For the families who live there, that is not just a place to live; that is their home. The pride of being part of an almost ownership is the same that you will find from people who own their own homes with the manicured lawns and with everything else, the people out there making sure that their place is a place that they're proud to bring people in, proud for people to come and visit them, and that's what a co-op is all about.

There was a time in this country, not very long ago, when new buildings, new places, rent-geared-to-income places, places that were affordable for families—20% to 25% of them were built by co-ops, and those co-ops that were set up did yeoman's service to the people of Ontario and the people of Canada in the development of new housing. Sadly, my understanding now is that this has fallen off to about 4% today. We've gone from 20% to 25% down to 4%. And you have to ask, why has all of this happened when we are screaming, when we have all these people out there who are looking for affordable housing, when we have 87,000 families on a wait-list, when we have 160,000 people who are looking for a decent place to live? How is it and why is it that a movement as fundamental as the co-op movement does not have the kind of say that they need to produce the kind of housing? I am absolutely positive that if they had the wherewithal to do it in terms of funding from governments, if they had the support that they need from all levels of government in this country, if they had investors who were willing to put money where the housing would do the most good and where we would be very proud of what was established there, with a true sense of neighbourhood and community, we would let the co-ops do it—absolutely, and everybody here knows that's probably true. I don't think there would be many doubters in this room that the co-ops could probably do it best.

I look back over my political career and I look back to what has actually happened here in terms of housing. It's really off the federal radar. In fact, the last minister who was totally responsible for housing in Canada was the Honourable Alan Redway, and he was the minister during the Mulroney years. Since then, although there are a repeated number of ministers over the years, it's only part of their job description. He was the last one who was dedicated only to housing. It's pretty sad what has

happened. It's pretty sad what happened in this province back in the 1990s—or late 1990s—when a new government came into power. I remember those icy words of Mike Harris when he said, “We're getting out of the housing business.”

I remember what happened when we got out of the housing business. I remember the co-ops that were being built in East York and the ones that were on the paper and the ones that were planned and the ones that a lot of money had been spent to make them all get ready to be built. They all just evaporated. They were gone. Those housing places—those decent places where people were going to live—were all gone, and I don't want us to try to make that mistake again.

1440

As was said earlier today, Ontario spends only about \$64 a person—about half the national average—on the building of decent affordable housing. That's not very much in the most populous and one of the richest provinces in Canada, and we can and should be spending a lot more. If we spent even the average of the other provinces, we would double the amount of money we're spending on housing: housing that is absolutely needed for the poorest among us, housing that is needed to revitalize our cities and towns, housing that will keep families together and lessen conflict. We're not doing that, and we should be doing that.

The other day, I had an opportunity to speak to people of the real estate association, OREA, and I told them that if we could solve the housing dilemma, we could solve many of the social ills of our community. We could help put an end to poverty if we had decent housing. We could help kids to learn better, so that they would continue in school, if their families had decent and affordable housing. We could make sure there was sufficient food if they weren't spending more than 50% of their money on rent, if they had decent housing. This is why everybody in this room, so far, has spoken in favour of the co-operative movement. It is probably the most economical way we could possibly have to build the kind of housing this province needs.

We need, though, to have a couple of other things—and I'm mindful of my time here. We need to have a housing plan with targets, so that we can meet those. It's not enough for a government to run, as this last government did several times ago, and say, “We're going to produce 20,000 units of affordable housing a year,” and then build only 16,000 over three, four or five years. That's not enough. If you're going to make the statement, you need to meet the targets.

We need to have capital available. Canada Mortgage and Housing in Ottawa is getting out of that. It's time that Ontario looked at whether or not capital might be made available to co-ops, church groups and others that want to come forward and build the kinds of housing we need.

We need to have inclusionary zoning. My colleague from Parkdale—High Park often talks about this and has put in bills about inclusionary zoning several times.

Where that is used in the United States, it's used to great effect. What you say is that municipalities can put inclusionary zoning in their official plan; therefore, anybody who comes forward and wants to build condominium units, apartment buildings or anything has to meet the inclusionary zoning, which allows for more affordable housing to be built. It doesn't cost anyone a dime. It doesn't cost the city money; it doesn't cost the province money. But it does ensure that when developers want to come forward and build, the inclusionary zoning bylaw kicks in and housing is built.

We need to have housing benefits. I heard, again from the OREA group the other day, that housing benefits are coming to an end and may not be renewed. And we're all waiting for this year's budget to see whether, in fact, that is true.

Those are the kinds of things we need to do. I listened to all the speakers today, and we know that this is the third attempt. I cast no aspersions on members of the government, but this is the third attempt. This is a very easy bill that can be passed quite simply, because I'm sure it's going to get all-party support at second reading to send it to committee. Based on what happens at committee, if there's a little bit of tweaking here and there, I'm sure it's going to get it as well for third reading later on. But I'm hoping as well that we can finish here today sometime around 6 o'clock before we go.

I don't know how many more people want to speak on it. I'm not advocating closure in any way, because all those members who need to speak or want to speak should be able to do so. But I think that sufficient has been said that all of us know what is likely to happen and all of us know the likely outcome at second reading. It behooves all of us not to make these good people wait longer.

My friend from Chatham-Kent-Essex talked about the amendment he is concerned about. I just want to go on record in my last 40 seconds to say that I think the amendment is a good thing. I think the amendment that has been put in from the last time will help those who are indigent. I think it will help those who are struggling. I think it will help single moms with kids who can't afford the money. And just like any court or tribunal can waive a fee, this court and tribunal ought to be allowed to waive the fee as well.

This causes me no great grief. But I am asking all of the members, don't bring these people back another day if we can possibly help it. Please, please make sure that it goes to committee and make sure that everything happens the way it's supposed to and that this bill finally becomes law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for questions and comments, I would like to draw members' attention to our guests in the Speaker's gallery. I want to welcome, on behalf of all members, a delegation from the government of Pakistan, led by Brigadier General Mahmood Sadiq, accompanied by Mr. Golo of the Pakistan consulate in Toronto. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature, and thank you for joining us today.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: That's a tough act to follow. I do want to thank the member from Beaches-East York for his comments on this legislation.

Speaker, I have been here now going on 10 years. There are some members of the Legislature who have been here longer than me and others who have been here less time than me. But I don't know the history really well. I don't know if this particular reform has been introduced previous to our government or not. When you find and learn about the background of this particular issue, it does seem very simple and straightforward and makes sense. One is left to wonder why it has not happened quite some time ago.

For those who are following the issue on television, quite simply, what we're talking about is this; here's the distinction in the main piece of the legislation: Co-operative housing is governed by the Co-operative Corporations Act, Ministry of Finance legislation. This is sort of where the rubber hits the road: It's not the Residential Tenancies Act, as is the case for other tenancies. As a result, co-ops currently cannot make applications to the Landlord and Tenant Board in order to resolve their disputes related to eviction and other matters.

I don't mind saying I was a bit surprised by the costs that are associated; their only avenue of access right now is to the courts. According to the CHF, the Co-operative Housing Federation, the current court process can be time-consuming and expensive. Here's the piece: \$3,000 to \$5,000 per arrears eviction for the non-profit co-op housing providers. That is obviously a very significant cost. By making this change, obviously that will be something that will be significantly affected. That's why we think it's positive.

What I would simply say is that I listened to the member from Beaches-East York, and it's nice to hear we have assumed, presumed—or we're hopeful, rather, is probably the language, that the third party will support the legislation. I'm less certain of the members of the official opposition. I hope you're correct that, in fact, we do have their support as this legislation moves forward for second reading vote in the not-too-distant future. I guess we'll all know the answer to that very soon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise today to address the comments made by the honourable member from Beaches-East York where he talks about the present legislation in front of us. It's interesting to hear the member opposite say that he's not sure how we'll vote. This is the third time this bill has come up. I think we've supported it twice already. The delay, the last one by the prorogation, is costing residents of Ontario literally tens of thousands of dollars and possibly up into hundreds of thousands.

The co-operatives are very important. I had a chance to meet with the Brookdale co-op group in Cornwall. It was interesting to note that their rent—after paying a very reasonable \$300 and change a month, they were

able to pay off their current debts. They're actually debt-free now. Their biggest problem is that most members in this co-op have been there for 20 or 30 years. They don't want to move out, and as they become elderly, they need renovations to accommodate seniors. So it's a good-news story.

We're certainly hoping that this legislation will pass. We wonder about just how interested the government is. As I say, this is the third time they've brought it up. It's timely legislation, something we need. We're looking at the need.

The member also talked about this group, once being 20% to 25% of the units being built, down around 4%. I guess it speaks a lot about the development in this province, whether it be manufacturing jobs or the building of non-profit housing units, something we're seeing leaving this province under this government.

I look forward to seeing this bill go through.

1450

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I congratulate my colleague from Beaches—East York on a very sensitive and knowledgeable presentation, which he does on a regular basis. He didn't just speak to the bill, but he spoke to so many other things that need to be addressed. He talked about the housing plan, the targets, the need for capital, inclusionary zoning and housing benefits, which people are worried about in the co-op sector.

These are the larger issues. It appears that all parties will be supporting this amendment and wanting to rush it through to committee hearings as quickly as possible. But some of the things that the member from Beaches—East York talked about are even more pressing, and that is that there are 150,000 people who are on a waiting list to get into affordable housing—which includes co-op housing. The majority of people obviously want to get into any kind of affordable housing that there is, be it non-profit, be it public housing, be it co-op. And it doesn't matter to poor people, who are finding it difficult in this economy to make ends meet—it doesn't matter where it is, as long as we're building it. The real problem is, we're not building any affordable housing that people need access to.

While we had the previous government, there was not one single public housing that was built. Under a Liberal regime, we haven't seen one single housing co-op being built—and this is one of the best forms of housing that we could have. Why? Because it houses people who are low-income and it houses people in the same place who are middle-class, folks who pay the market value. This is one of the best forms of living that we have. Rather than building more of this, we haven't done anything in the last 20 years.

It really is a depressing thing to think about. But with respect to this bill, let's get it passed right away.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I too want to add my voice to the comments made by my colleague from Beaches—East

York. His comment earlier reminded each one of us why we are here. The fact that the new Bill 14 talks about the waiver fee that the opposition party does not support—this is a major concern, especially when we know that in every riding in this province, there is a vulnerable population. The proposed bill does address, does provide additional support with respect to low-income families and support, and that is the right thing to do.

I would challenge my colleagues opposite. At the end of the day, we have to ask, why are you here? If you're not here to support and recognize especially those who have low income and the vulnerable population, why are you here? You're not championing them. Who are you championing?

The other piece I wanted to remind everybody in the House is, we have spent over seven hours on this debate. The question has to be asked among each one of us here: Are we going to ask our colleagues at co-op housing, Harvey and his team, to come back—how many more times? We all agree this bill is ready to go to the committee. Let's do the right thing. Before we adjourn the House today, let's get it to committee—this is where the real refinement of the bill needs to be done, not in this Legislature—more importantly, to give assurances to the co-op housing partners that we are listening to you and we're willing to work with you.

Mr. Speaker, I can't emphasize it enough: Let's go to the committee. If we continue more debate, nothing is going to be done. We're going to come back here next week or another day this week to talk about this piece.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Beaches—East York for his response.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the members from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Trinity—Spadina and Scarborough—Agincourt for their very kind comments. Unfortunately, for me, anyway, I was only given 10 minutes because I just made that cut where we went from a 20-minute debate to a 10-minute debate. There was so much more that I wanted to say.

But in a nutshell, I thank you for the comments that you made, and yes, we do need to act on this. This has been six years since the request was made and since the ideas were first floated in 2007. We've gone through an election since then, or maybe two. This is the third reading of the bill. We've had people come here day after day in eager anticipation that something is going to happen, and it needs to happen.

Oftentimes in this Legislature we talk, because there are 107 of us, and we want to get our viewpoints known. But I think the viewpoints of Ontarians are pretty well unanimous on this and certainly the viewpoint of the legislators in this building and in this room appears to be closing in on unanimity. There may be some small structural things that still need to be done, but the people of Ontario are in desperate need of housing, and if we can help the co-operative movement even in this small way, then we need to do it. But I think governments need

to start looking at the bigger picture. The bigger picture isn't just a dispute mechanism and how to make it easier and fairer for the tenants of the co-op movement. The bigger picture is how to build the housing that we so desperately need. When you see people who are homeless, when you see people who are under-housed, when you see people who are languishing on waiting lists for years and years, then I think all of us need to do something to make that better. One of the first steps is this bill. But in the budget that's coming next week or next month, please, please make sure that there's money for housing as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. I myself have to shrink my two hours to 10 minutes because there is so much to say, but I can say that the end is near, finally, to my friends Harvey Cooper and Dale Reagan. My colleague from Beaches–East York said, “Don't bring them here anymore.” I think I'd like to see them here as often as possible. I think they are wonderful people. They've been down here many, many times. They don't mind coming to see us, but I have to say that it has been a delight working on this particular file for many years.

Harvey Cooper commented, when I saw him last time, “When we started to deal with this particular file here, you had lots of curly, dark hair.” It's been nine long years since we have been dealing with this particular file. It is here, it's almost the end and it will be good to see that we're moving with it.

The last time I was invited by the Co-operative Housing Federation to make a presentation at their conference, I was the parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for housing. I told them at the time, “Harvey, I will not come again. I will not come back, and don't invite me again, unless we deliver on this particular issue.”

We are here, and I'd like to welcome again into our chamber Harvey Cooper and Dale Reagan and guests from the Co-operative Housing Federation. Yes, finally we're getting there. We have to say that they represent a particular group in our province that is doing wonderful work—absolutely wonderful work—being providers of housing and accommodation. There is so much needed, especially for our middle- and lower-income people. They are doing tremendous work and we, as a government—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Halton on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I don't believe there's a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the table to ascertain if there is a quorum present in the House.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

1500

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. We return to the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. This is part and parcel of the working of the House—that we have to understand, that we have to accept—but, Speaker, we have work to do. I think it's about time that we move on.

As I was saying before, I think we are at the end of this particular debate. I think it's got a wonderful flavour because the people from the co-op federations will be happy when finally we can see this bill being sent to committee, brought back, and move on with it. I was saying before that they have to be commended not only for being so forceful in seeing that we deal with their request, because of the work that they do, but it's on behalf of the people that they represent as well.

I think my colleague the member from Beaches–East York was trying to allude to the fact that there are some 550 co-ops in Ontario. They house some 44,000 households which contain some 125,000 people. And these are our residents; they are people who live in Ontario and they benefit from the various forms of housing. Co-op housing is one of those wonderful forms of tenure that houses people in much need of affordable housing.

The bill initially started in 2004, so it's not five or six years; it's some nine years ago that the bill started this long journey. It is unfortunate that it has taken so long, but I can see the end coming to an end. Soon, we will be able to deliver to the co-op people what they've been asking for quite some time now.

The member from Essex–Kent has been mentioning that it would have been nice to have a consultation and stuff like that. I have to say, with all due respect to the member, he may not be aware, but a lot of consultation has taken place and there has been a lot of support for the various bills—for all of them, as a matter of fact: the one that was introduced in 2004, and the one in 2011, Bill 198; in 2012, Bill 65, and we had an extensive consultation prior to that. So we are in 2013 and still dealing with the bill.

Let me say that support came from a number of organizations as well, especially from the Advocacy Centre for Tenants of Ontario, which expressed support in the effort to propose reforms. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., the Ontario Co-operative Association, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Housing Services Corp. also expressed support. As well, both the Conservatives and the NDP expressed support for the bill. I think today, more than ever, the support that we see in the House is stronger than ever.

I do have some co-op housing in my particular area, and I have to go back to 1979, when I first saw the first co-op building going up in my own area. At the time, I was a councillor with the wonderful then-city of North York. Those were the good old days. This is well before the so-called amalgamation, Speaker. You were here. I

remember you were here as well when we did amalgamate the city of Toronto. This was a wonderful form of housing, and I was anxious to see it going. I have to say, even today, every time I go by on Jane Street north of Sheppard and south of Finch Avenue, I take a look at that particular housing because there was some opposition to it from some of the local residents. Now I look at the building, and it's still a wonderful building. It is well kept; it's well maintained. It fits well with the neighbourhood. So, therefore, I am proud that I was able to have that particular housing in my area.

Speaker, why are we dealing with this particular bill? It's because of all forms of housing that have some difficulties, some problems. It has been very contentious; it has been very expensive; it has been very time-consuming for both sides, I would say—the occupants and the co-op federation as well—to deal with some of those issues.

What the bill does is amend both the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and the Co-operative Corporations Act as well. By doing so, some of the disputes—they are lengthy; they are expensive—instead of to the courts, will be moving to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

There are a number of examples as to why and how. For example, some of reasons: arrears; persistent late payments of rent; illegal behaviour; interfering with reasonable enjoyment; wilful damage, and so forth.

Others that are still being dealt with in the courts are, for example, violation of a no-pet provision, and failure to fulfill co-op members' dues, such as cutting the lawn or removing the snow.

The important thing is that we move some of the bigger issues into the Landlord and Tenant Act. I think some of the previous speakers have mentioned with respect to fees. I think the fees are based on those individual cases where the board may feel compelled to let go and abolish the fee.

All in all, this is a good piece of legislation—late, but it's here. The end is near, Speaker. I think I can see Harvey Cooper and Dale Reagan saying, "Finally, we're getting to the end," and we are here today to debate this particular piece.

It has been said by previous speakers that they would still like to see some amendments. Yes, let's send it to committee and let's bring it back. Let's bring back a better bill than what it is. It's always better for the applicants when we can say not only have we approved it but we've approved a better bill. I hope that when we do, Speaker, we can present it to the House and approve it at that particular time.

My time is up, Speaker, and I thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member talks about the bill being a little late. He's redefined "late." This bill started in 2007, and this is its third or fourth time before the House—

Interjection: In 2004, Ted.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: In 2004, it started. It was an election promise, I think, in 2007. You've redefined "late." It's late, late, late, late.

I guess there's something about this bill, because it did attract in a former member from Kingston and the Islands, and he has been studiously listening to the comments. He probably—I'm not sure. He never served in opposition—I don't believe you ever served in opposition—so he probably doesn't understand quorum calls, or he looks on quorum calls as a very bad thing, as governments do. But the government does have a quorum now, and it's important that the government does maintain that quorum. This is an important piece of legislation, and the government should be here to listen to it. I'm glad to see that the quorum is now present.

The member talks about this bill and all the good things it's going to do. I'm going to speak to the bill in a few minutes, and I think that there's another side to this bill. I think this bill needs some serious amendments in order to function and in order to accomplish the kinds of things that this bill is capable of doing. In many ways, the concept is a good concept.

The member thinks that it's going to operate just the way he would like it to operate. I'm sorry, but I think that the way it's currently construed, it's going to be quite a mess in the marketplace, and that's probably a bad thing. It can probably be straightened out fairly easily with a couple of amendments.

This government has been loath to allow amendments in most of their legislation. After four times of introduction, you'd think they'd get this one right, but I think they're still lacking in how this is going to work in the housing business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

1510

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to G14. I think I share some of the frustration of some of the other members in this House, when this has come before us before. I think that the good people from the co-op housing movement, who have been such strong advocates and voices for change in the province—I don't think they should have to keep coming back here to the House. Certainly, they've been patient, and they've been very vocal, as they should be, because there is room for improvement on the co-operative housing movement in the province of Ontario.

Just even during the by-election, I spent a lot of time in the existing co-ops that are in the Kitchener-Waterloo riding. Those are democratically organized housing situations. People have the democratic right to speak out and speak up for their rights within that setting. Quite honestly, they did a really good job during the by-election. They had some clear asks, and one of them, of course, has to do with their rights as tenants when they're in a situation to appeal.

But I also want to point out that there is a deficit on the maintenance of co-op housing in the province of Ontario. This is an investment that we have all made over

the years. Certainly, it slowed down a great deal in recent years, namely the last 10 to 15 years. That said, though, that investment needs to be protected and it needs to be upheld.

When I was walking around some of those units, you could see the wear and tear of years. So we need a serious conversation about how to strengthen the co-op movement, how to protect it and how to build it. When you are walking through a co-operative housing setting, you are very aware that the people in that setting are stronger because they're living in safe housing and they are supported by the community as a whole. So let's get this right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to make a couple of minutes of remarks in response to the member from York West. I thank him for his comments.

Some of the other members who have spoken on the legislation have talked a little bit about their wish that there had been more money invested in this particular sector over the course of our eight or 10 years as government. It's important to mention, I think, that \$3 billion is not an insignificant amount of money to be invested over that period of time. That has brought some rebound, I would say, to this particular sector. It's not about throwing stones here this afternoon, but that \$3 billion, perhaps, to some who think it is too little, might not have appeared to be too little if in fact the period of time from 1995 to 2003 had seen some investment in the non-profit and social housing sector.

I've spoken on this bill a few times in the past and I've mentioned that I spent 15 years as a property manager in the social housing sector, and so I know a little bit about it. I remember very clearly being in my car with the radio on in 1995 when a very clearly articulated position was made by the government of the day that they were no longer going to be moving forward with these kinds of projects. So there was a large vacuum that had to be filled when we came to government in 2003. It wasn't easy. Not only did the government of the day in 1995 not want to build any more, but they also made a decision to spend money to cancel and get out of contracts that were already in the queue, where drawings had been drawn up, land had been purchased and the like.

Hon. Liz Sandals: They tried to do that in Guelph.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Yes, they did that in a few places; I remember very clearly. As I said, I was in the sector. So it was a very significant issue.

I'm only raising that in the context of this \$3 billion, to some people, seeming insignificant; I would say it's anything but. Perhaps it would have even looked more robust had there been investment in that eight-year period.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

I'll return to the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Indeed, before they go, before they leave the House again, I would like to say to Harvey

Cooper and Dale that it's good to see you again here. As you can see, it's a process that is evolving; it's part of the democratic process. It has been a pleasure to have seen you over the years down here. They have been very persistent, Speaker, to make sure that indeed we bring this to a conclusion.

I'd like to say thanks to all the members who have joined in on the debate, from Halton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Thunder Bay-Atikokan and even all the other speakers who have spoken in support of this particular bill.

I know we're getting to the end of the debate, and the reason we are dealing with the bill is to indeed make sure that the changes that the co-op federation is looking for are to have a speedier system, a system that is more efficient and more manageable, a system that offers transparency for the federation and the tenants as well.

When we say that it's an expensive process, it's not only for the federation itself, but it's for those occupants, which sometimes may drag on for months and months and it's very expensive. Every case is between \$3,500 and \$5,000, and this can put a burden on all of them. When this happens, the situation in that particular building or housing accommodation tends to sour and things tend to get worse. So I hope that this will bring some much-sought-after relief to both the tenants and the federation.

I thank you, Speaker, and I thank the members for their time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I don't want for a moment to depreciate the importance of this bill. It's very important to a lot of people in Ontario. There are 125,000 Ontarians who live in 550 non-profit co-op housing, and it's important to them.

But this morning, there were almost 600,000 Ontarians who woke up without a job. This bill isn't going to put any of those 600,000 people back to work. Half the pulp and paper mills in northern Ontario are shut down, inoperative, because electricity prices have made life very difficult for them to operate. The agriculture industry has increased taxes with the eco taxes that have been slapped on them in excess of \$1,000 for huge, huge tractor tires—red tape. The horse racing industry has been devastated. We're not debating that. Companies are moving out of Ontario. Individuals are moving out of Ontario to western Canada in order to find jobs, and yet we're—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. I have to ask the member for Halton how these remarks come back to Bill 14.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay. The member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Yet here we are discussing Bill 14. Thank you, Speaker. I was just there. Here we are discussing Bill 14. As I said, there are 125,000 Ontarians in 550 non-profit housing units, and these people will

rely on this piece of legislation to maintain the way in which they enjoy their housing.

This is an important piece of legislation because it will change the cost of the complaint business from something in the order of \$3,000, maybe \$5,000, to take a complaint through the court system, down to \$45 for a filing fee, which will vastly change the way people conduct themselves within that co-op unit.

I think probably it's fairly obvious that when you change the price from \$3,000 to \$5,000 for a complaint down to \$45 for a complaint, you might just get a lot more complaints, and if that were to happen, the people who would be most affected are the tenants with legitimate concerns. A tenant with a legitimate concern will take forever to get that legitimate concern heard in front of the Landlord and Tenant Board. That's not fair. This government hasn't taken that into consideration in this bill, and that's the thing that has to be corrected with amendments.

1520

I don't believe the government is intending for this to happen, but that is exactly what's going to happen. When you reduce the price by that much, you're going to get a lot more complaints. Those complaints can't be heard on a timely basis, and that will tie up the Landlord and Tenant Board for months and months. That will make this piece of legislation very onerous on those tenants, especially on those tenants who have legitimate concerns about the way in which they live within the co-operative unit.

It could change the types of complaints that come before the board as well. You're going to get a lot more, shall we say, nuisance applicants who will be more willing to spend \$45 than they would be to spend the \$3,000 to \$5,000 of legal fees to go through the court system. That will have a very negative impact on tenants who have a legitimate concern to bring before the board.

Since 2004, this bill has been a priority for the co-op housing sector in Ontario. If they want to move these complaints out of the expensive court system into a tribunal system, that makes a great deal of sense. That's efficiency, it makes a great deal of sense, and it's something that we would be pleased to support.

As I say, the costs of settling it in the court system are extremely expensive, and the cost of settling it through the Landlord and Tenant Act will be much reduced, to the point where costs may not even be a factor when it comes to whether or not you're going to put in a complaint. It's estimated that this will save \$1 million annually by moving these cases to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and moving disputes out of the courts and into the board would make the resolution process much more efficient, cost-efficient and transparent for co-ops and their members, hopefully. Again, I have great concern that you're going to go from a high-cost system to a very low-cost system, and that is going to increase the volume significantly. I think that in the committee, this government and the members on that standing committee should look at this very carefully to ensure that the people of

Ontario, the tenants of Ontario, and the 125,000 Ontarians who live in co-operative housing are indeed getting the kind of service that this bill purports to give them.

I'm pleased to have two co-operative housings in my riding, one in Oakville and one in Burlington, and I can tell you they are marvellous organizations. On a cost-efficient basis, they provide a good place to live, a healthy place to live. They've got lots of services for the people who live there. Co-op community housing is something that is a good thing for the community to have and a good place for families to raise their children, in a co-operative atmosphere. Those are good places to raise families.

The kinds of things that the rent review board will look at are things like rent arrears, late payment for rent, wilful damage, illegal activities by tenants, interfering with other tenants' enjoyment of their property, such as noise, barbecues, those kinds of things. There are perhaps 300 cases heard every year in today's environment. I suspect that that 300 cases may increase significantly.

The things that can't be heard: I'm not sure why this would be, but it doesn't seem reasonable that the Landlord and Tenant Board wouldn't look at violations such as the no-pet provision or failure of a co-op member to perform his duties of clearing snow or cutting the lawn. I don't know how those duties would vary from the late payments, wilful damage, illegal activities etc. I think that perhaps the things the board would hear might also be expanded to allow the courts to be less active in this area.

Interruption.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's mine. It's a very bad thing. The former member from Kingston and the Islands didn't have a BlackBerry when he was here. It's a very bad thing when they go off, especially when you're speaking. Don't worry; I will get my BlackBerry back. Maybe the Sergeant-at-Arms will give it to me sometime in the near future.

Anyway, it's a bill that I think needs support. It's a bill that needs a few little adaptations to its conclusion to make it the successful bill I think it can be. I hope the government will be very supportive in making those amendments when this bill gets to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to speak to Bill 14 and to our friends in the co-operative housing movement. I do support the call of some of my colleagues who say, send your folks home, please. We've petitioned the assembly to give you the chance to go to your homes so that you don't have to sit and listen to this debate any longer.

But in case you haven't gotten the point at this time, we're absolutely supportive of co-operative housing. I used to live at the Esplanade in downtown Toronto. I remember that one of Michael Moore's movies years ago featured the Esplanade as one of the safest communities to live in. He walked and knocked on doors of some of the houses where I lived, and people had left their houses unlocked. He said this was symptomatic of Toronto and

Canada, where we have less crime than the United States. But he didn't quite realize that he was in a special community. He was in a co-operative housing community.

Speaker, it's clear that we support this particular bill. It's a small piece of the puzzle. The big puzzle here is the fact that housing in this city and this province is absolutely unaffordable. If you look at the studies of poverty in Toronto, it is focused outside the core. We are building a downtown core that is just for people who are either financially secure or somehow able to access a heck of a lot of credit, and that's unacceptable. It's not the kind of city I want to live in, and when I talk to constituents, it's not the kind of community they want to live in.

We have a government that has promised action on poverty reduction, and years later, we are absolutely stalled. I would like to know what members of the government say when constituents come into their office and talk about their precarious housing situations. When you have to turn around, as a constituency worker, and say, "There are 160,000 people ahead of you on the list for affordable housing," how is that acceptable? How is it that we don't have a real strategy in place here to build affordable housing in Ontario? Those are the questions I have today, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have another couple of minutes to respond to the member from Halton. I thank him for his remarks.

He seemed to focus most of his 10 minutes on one particular item, that being his belief that by taking the appeals process from the court system and moving it to the landlord and tenant tribunal, we would end up with an avalanche of these sorts of issues before the Landlord and Tenant Board. I would say to him that we don't believe that will be the case. Of course, there is still an opportunity for people in co-operative housing to appeal decisions to their own board at the co-op to try to get some of this resolved before it ends up at the LTB. That has always been the case. That's not going to change.

Having said that, Speaker, why would the member oppose it, understanding, as he said in his own remarks, that right now if you're in a co-op situation your only recourse is to the courts and you have to pay \$3,000 to \$5,000 potentially—maybe less, maybe more—to try to have that situation resolved? How can you sit there and suggest for a second that it is okay to let this stand and be the only opportunity they have? If the member has a different suggestion, short of moving it to the LTB and out of the court system, that he thinks could land us in a place that would potentially address his concerns, I think we would all be interested in hearing it.

1530

This is, at some level, an access-to-justice issue as well, I would say. Why should somebody who is in a tenancy situation be faced with having to pay potentially \$3,000 to \$5,000 to have a wrong righted when somebody else in other tenancies in the province of Ontario

can go to the LTB? It's not that complicated, as I see it. As I said before, I'm not sure why it didn't happen before we became government or why, quite frankly, it's taken so long for us to get it through since we've been in government. But that's where we are now.

I know the member will have a couple of minutes to respond to the comments that he has heard from all of us. The member of the third party raised some questions as well and perhaps we'll get some answers in his two-minuter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to stand up and provide remarks to my esteemed colleague from Halton.

It's interesting, because one of the remarks that I picked up on is that he mentioned that the proposed dispute resolution system that will result as a matter of these changes will propose \$1 million in savings. I hope so; however, the actual numbers from the Liberals don't always add up.

In fact, I think there was a call coming in from the Auditor General. He just put out a report today, Speaker, and I think he wanted to let our esteemed colleague know that there was \$85 million more spent on this gas plant—that's never been built, by the way, nor produced a single kilowatt of power to help anybody in Ontario. I think he wanted to call and make sure he knew that, because just think of how many units could be provided for \$85 million, or the \$275 million that this whole plant cost at the end of the day without producing a kilowatt of power, Speaker. It's very interesting.

We need, as I said in my earlier communication, to be able to find some balance with this legislation. There's two sides to every story, as there always is. There are tenants; there are landlords. We need to ensure that both are consulted and not rush something out the door or out the gate like the horse racing fiasco that we've been facing, where they run it out the gate and then they try to come back and pretend they're going to save the whole industry. We need to always bring the thought process to the floor before we run these things out. We need to look at all sides of the legislation to ensure that it's going to serve all Ontarians' best interests.

The member from Thunder Bay referenced that he doesn't know why it's taken so long. Well, I'm not certain it's a real long time, 2007. It's kind of like the coal plants they've been going to close for the 10 years of their term and haven't got there yet. Maybe he could go back and ask his cabinet colleagues or the campaign team, perhaps, and maybe they could give him some inside answers, because I think that's where we're going to get the ones to the gas plants. And he can maybe then tell us when we can expect this legislation to go through.

We're relatively willing to support it with a lot of amendments in there so that it actually does serve the people that it's intended to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from Halton. He generally has a lot to say from his own perspective. But I want to compliment him today that his statements were very balanced. He was talking about the necessity of moving forward with this bill. He talked about some of the things he wanted to see. He got his jibes in, of course, about the government, as only he can do, and reminded them of their past failures.

I would hope, though, that in his two-minute opportunity at the end he will talk about not so much the failure of the government but the success or the potential success of this Legislature when we all appear to be united to act in concert on this particular bill. It would appear to me that if it does go to committee, and in all likelihood it will, that there will not be a great deal of tinkering done. This is a relatively minor bill that will only solve one of the problems that the co-ops are having, and that is the problem around adjudication. Where do you send problems? Do you send them to the courts or do you send them to a tribunal? Obviously, tribunals are always cheaper forms of justice, more accessible to those people who need them, tend to be faster, tend to be mediated and a number of other things. I ask him to consider that.

I feel some empathy for him as well. In my 12 years here I've only seen two or three members have their BlackBerry go off when they were speaking. I could tell he looked somewhat embarrassed but he need not be. It happens to all of us who bring our BlackBerrys into this place, one of the reasons that I have never, ever carried mine into this chamber in my life—and I hope I never do—because I wouldn't want that to happen to me. But good luck all the same. Get your BlackBerry back.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Yes, don't you love those BlackBerrys? Thank you to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane for his comments, and the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan. The member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan said that I'm opposed to this bill. I know, politically, that the Liberals would love it if we were opposed to this piece of legislation. We're not opposed to it. We support this piece of legislation—very firmly support it. It'll be good for the people that live in co-op housing.

We think it could be a better bill. If the Liberals are satisfied with a bill that's good enough, so be it; we think this bill could be better. With a few amendments, I think it could be an excellent bill, so I would encourage the members to look to the committee to make this a better bill than it is now. I think your former leader used to talk about how no one of us is as smart as all of us, and I think that's the whole point of bringing a bill out and having public discussion on it. I think you can always make a piece of legislation a little better, and that's what we're trying to do here, so we would look forward to that.

Of course, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound was very astute. He realized that I was getting a phone

call from the Auditor General, and unfortunately I couldn't answer it, being engaged at the time.

The member for Beaches-East York, being a former mayor of East York, he's very astute in handling individuals and knowing how to be very discreet in his comments. Of course, in a minority government, strange things happen, and very often we're together with the NDP; the Conservatives and the NDP are working together in these minority situations, which, of course, is a very strange situation. The member for Beaches-East York talked about my comments, and I think he used the phrase "in his own perception." Of course that, being interpreted, would mean the totally opposite perception of what he might hold, but we might also—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Further debate. The member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Boy, you see some strange things in this place sometimes, but actually, it's good to see the lesson about the BlackBerry. I've never seen that before, so it's good to note.

It is a pleasure to stand up and to speak about G14 and the co-op housing amendment. I think we have to go back in time and give some consideration. This is a reintroduction of G14 and to this amendment in particular, and I think we have to remember why we're revisiting it. Certainly, the House was prorogued on October 15, and that definitely set us back in time. It interrupted the work of this House; it interrupted fairly progressive pieces of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. I have been advised that the member for Kitchener-Waterloo has already spoken to this bill at second reading. We appreciate her interest in bringing more comments forward at this time, but perhaps at third reading we'll hear her next presentation, or in questions and comments.

Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I will be sharing my time with the member from York South-Weston.

I rise today to speak on this very important piece of proposed legislation. I know every member in this House is concerned about affordable housing and accessible housing within our communities. Before I begin my remarks, besides recognizing Harvey Cooper, I wanted to recognize Simone Swail, because she also came to visit my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, along with the residents in Bridletowne co-op. I also met with Bridle Manor Co-op housing—the residents in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt.

Almost every speaker this afternoon focused on why this bill is necessary, but one thing I do want to echo is the fact that there is a certain section I know the opposition party does not support, with respect to the fee waiver protection—section 181.1. I just wanted to read the section of the bill; 181.1 states, "(1) The board may, in accordance with the rules, waive or defer all or part of a fee charged under section 181." I know the opposition members are concerned about these fee waivers, and we recognize the fact that this particular section was not in

the previous bill, Bill 65, because the minister is concerned about the low-income and vulnerable populations. If passed, the proposed legislation would authorize the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive or defer fees and charges in specific circumstances in accordance with its rules.

1540

The proposal also is consistent with the other type of cases in other tribunals in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. For example, the fee waiver program was implemented in Ontario courts in 2004, folks. So over 10 years ago we in Ontario already had fee waiver programs. So for the opposition party to say they are concerned about this section is inconsistent, because it already happens in other tribunals. A similar provision already exists in two other Ontario tribunals; for example, the Ontario Municipal Board since 1990, and the Assessment Review Board since 2006. So the fee waiver program that's been proposed in the Bill 14 will be consistent with other boards. Furthermore, the fee waivers are intended to help individuals with low income, so the allegation or suggestion of abuse is not accurate.

The other piece is that the Landlord and Tenant Board will be working in consultation with the Ministry of the Attorney General. They will set up criteria to determine what kind of fees will be waived, the eligibility, and it will mirror other programs that already exist, Mr. Speaker. So for the opposition party to say they do not support this particular section of the bill—they need to be reminded that other tribunals, other existing courts, already have this fee waiver.

The other piece why I as a member of this House support the bill is because of the efficiency, the cost-effectiveness and the transparency. Because at the end of the day we're all here for one purpose: to support, to protect and to help Ontarians across Ontario.

My riding of Scarborough—Agincourt is not the only riding with co-operative housing. I know, having grown up in downtown Toronto—I grew up with many good friends and had played with classmates at Bain Co-op, one of the oldest co-ops in the city; and I had the pleasure of representing that area when I was a young school board trustee.

At the end of the day, we're all here for one purpose: to improve and protect Ontario, and in this particular case to help to streamline and help the dispute mechanism, and not to further burden the court system on this particular matter.

I'm going to turn my remaining time to the member from York South—Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm very pleased to rise and to express and add my support for Bill 14, the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013. We've been talking about this bill for a long time, and I can't wait for it to become law, like many of us here.

The passage of this bill is extremely important to a good number of my constituents who live in co-ops. As we've heard from many of the other members here in the

House, this bill would make tenure dispute resolution for co-op residents more efficient, cost-effective and transparent.

I think that this needs to be passed into law as soon as possible to make a difference—a real difference—for many residents of the co-op complexes across our province. It would help many people across our province, and in my riding of York South—Weston, a riding that shares quite a long history with co-ops.

Actually, the first co-op building in the city of Toronto was right in York South—Weston. That first co-operative complex was and is known as Beech Hall. In the 1970s, the Toronto borough of York had decided to phase out the seniors' residence called Beech Hall. That was a subsidized complex for seniors, and they wanted to make way for a new development. The residents were all in their eighties and their nineties and they were asked to vacate the premises. The seniors didn't want to leave their homes. They really had a determined struggle to save their homes, with their politicians at the time. The history has been documented in a documentary, *The Battle of Beech Hall*, which I encourage you to watch sometime. It's quite entertaining to see how these seniors were determined and fought the establishment at the time to save their home. It became a real political hot issue, and you had politicians in favour of the new development and politicians that were lined up against that. I recall, I believe, a young councillor at the time, John Nunziata, sort of placing himself in front of the bulldozers that were going to demolish the homes. It was quite the story at the time.

Needless to say, the residents were able to save their homes. Beech Hall is alive and well in the riding of York South—Weston. I know that the residents of this complex and the others that live in co-ops in my riding would really benefit from this bill passing into law. We want to see this happen as soon as possible, because it will make a difference.

Co-operative housing, as you know, plays a really important role in affordable housing in the province of Ontario, and there are certain ridings such as mine where that is important to a great number of people. It's only fair that residents of co-ops would have most of the same protections and benefits available to landlords and tenants, including the access to mediation services. As you know, right now most disputes go through the courts, and that is costly; it's very time-consuming. Most of the time, the residents that live in a co-op don't even have those means. I'm also pleased that now the proposed legislation would allow the LTB to waive or defer the fees that it charges in specific circumstances and in accordance with its rules.

I can only say that this proposal would bring consistency to how these types of cases are treated at other Ontario tribunals, such as the Ontario Municipal Board, as well as in the courts.

I'm very pleased that our government is supporting the co-op sector. I do want to mention, in particular, Harvey Cooper, who I've met with many times. I want to com-

mend all of you for being here today and for advocating in favour of the co-ops, and the residents especially. It's the people that are important; it's not the buildings, as we know. We're here for the people, to make a difference in their lives, to improve their life. That is our role as politicians, but we also have to thank you for bringing certain particulars to our attention and to sort of heed the way to the changes that are needed.

I want to reiterate my support for this bill. I can't wait for it to be passed into law, and I hope that with the help of all my colleagues here, we can do that in a very expedient frame of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to rise to offer comments on the two members from Scarborough–Agincourt and York South–Weston.

It's interesting. We're sitting here talking about a government promise made in the 2003 election, and after 10 years, we're seeing some action on it. I'm not sure how serious they are. We've seen it three times already, and it's now the third time we're seeing it, so it's coming back. This is a bill that generally has support from all three parties, so it just makes you wonder if they'll get the will to get this finally through.

We have to remember that co-operative housing is a very important component. It has the potential to solve or to be part of a solution that can look after some of the costly housing options that are in this province.

As I said previously, there's a co-operative housing group in my riding that affords very affordable housing to the residents, to the point that it's fully subscribed and they're looking now at making it more senior-accessible, as the tenants are getting older and interested in not moving out.

1550

We want to make sure we do this right, though. We're looking at saving the residents money on a dispute resolution. But you must remember that the landlords in this case are actually the tenants themselves. It is a co-operative so you want to make sure that it's not only an economic solution but it's actually a solution that works. We're looking at increasing the number of complaints because of the drop in price substantially. We want to make sure the resolution—the tribunal actually has the resources to hear the complaints in a timely manner. We're waiting to see, actually, as we move through committee to make some of these changes that are important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Two minutes? I'm good for two minutes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to get up and talk about G14. I could talk for about 10 minutes or 20 minutes for affordable housing and for co-op, because it's such an important issue. Housing—safe, affordable housing—is one of the key factors in a strong economy. It's a key factor in social justice; it's a key factor in the safety of our communities.

As I said already, this is a reintroduction. Prorogation interrupted the original piece of legislation, but we're back at it. I think, actually, the very fact that we all agree this is needed—this dispute resolution process needs to be clarified and needs attention. I would agree with the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan that this actually is a matter of access to justice, and it's been a long time coming.

I think if you look back, for the last nine years, the co-operative housing sector has been lobbying the provincial government to move co-op evictions out of the courts and use the existing infrastructure of the tribunal system used by other non-profit housing providers and private landlords. This has been a long time coming. I don't think there's anybody who is going to dispute that. And certainly, I think this debate gives us all an opportunity to talk about the need for real targets on the affordable housing portfolio. I definitely think that municipalities that have weighed in as well, both at AMO and FCM, on the need for housing infrastructure investment—this is a long-standing issue at that level, as well. I look forward to touching on some other key areas as the afternoon progresses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Just a few comments on the submission by the members from Scarborough–Agincourt and York South–Weston, two champions of the people they represent. I know both areas, Scarborough–Agincourt and York South–Weston. I know these two particular areas very well. I know the extremely important work and dedication they bring to those two communities as the elected members.

I share with them sometimes, when we are in a very jovial mood, and we say who has got what in a particular area. I have a hard time convincing them that I have the most seniors and more rental units of any other area in Metro Toronto. I have to defend myself because the member from Scarborough–Agincourt and member from York South–Weston say, "No, we have the largest number of seniors and low-income people." So I know the kind of work they do day in and day out, and I'm very pleased to see that they are supporting this bill today.

We have heard that the bill should be receiving some more amendments. We welcome some more amendments when the bill travels to the committee level. The fact that we started to deal with this bill in 2004 doesn't mean that we have to be prisoners of the past and not continue to act on it. I think we are almost there.

The people representing all the co-op federations are anxious to see that this bill comes to an end. It's very important to them. It's important to the residents of all co-operative housing in our province, and we have a lot of them. There are some 125,000 people who are being accommodated by this particular form of housing, and I think that it's wonderful to see that it's done, Speaker. I thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm interested in listening to the debate that's gone on so far. I was very disappointed that the member for Kitchener–Waterloo didn't get to speak longer but apparently those are the rules of the House. I was looking forward to doing a hit on the member from Kitchener–Waterloo; however, that's not going to happen.

How long do we have to bring a bill back before it gets passed?

Interjection: Once, twice, sold.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Sold. Was it two or three times? I don't know.

In 2004, this was first introduced—just incredible. But I guess when you have a government that's embroiled in turmoil for 10 years it's difficult to get these things through. Because you have to debate scandals, you have to debate Ornge, you have to debate—now we're into gas plants—so it's just incredible how slow this process has been. I'm sure it is important to the people of Ontario and it's important to our parties because we all agree on this thing. We all agree on this thing. Now this government has been more concerned with putting people out of work than getting on with this type of legislation. I look at the horse racing industry and how that's going downhill, and it was supported by our socialist friends to the left here.

Let's get this thing passed. Let's get on with some important legislation and see if we can get Ontario back to work. That's really what I'm interested in. I'm interested in my riding in rural Ontario and to get industry going back there, and get this province cooking on all eight cylinders, which it hasn't been doing for quite a few years now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Agincourt has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the members from York South–Weston, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Kitchener–Waterloo, the minister responsible for seniors and Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Speaker, the core of this Bill 14 focuses on dispute resolution. Yes, we recognize across Ontario the issue of affordable housing. The affordable housing issue cannot be done singly in the province of Ontario; we need to do it in partnership with our federal partners as well as our municipal partners.

The reason why this bill is before the House is because we have expressed concern and commitment—it sounds like, from all three parties—to help move along dealing with the whole issue of dispute resolution.

So I'm very, very pleased to add my voice, and hopefully today before we adjourn the House we will bring this particular piece of proposed legislation to a committee so that committee's work can be further enhanced in going through clause-by-clause to improve the bill.

I know every member of this House does support, somehow, dealing with the issue of fee waivers. As much as the opposition party does not agree, the fee waiver is not a concern for them but the reality is every riding has low-income residents, and we need to find every way to support them. The fact that we already have tribunals that

have been supported with regard to fee waivers, so to say that in this particular legislation the fee waiver is not important and that you will not support that section of the bill, is not accurate. We need to encourage everyone that before we adjourn today to bring this entire bill to committee so that the good folks from co-op housing do not have to come back how many times, how many months? Let's move on and let's get this work done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: Many people in the House, and definitely many people at home, may not know that I'm an amateur auctioneer. You know, it's customary when you're getting near the end of selling an item that you typically say, "Going once, going twice" and you drop the hammer and say, "Sold."

In this case, the "going once" was 2007. The "going twice" was last session just before the Liberals prorogued this House for four long months so that nothing got done. And today, Speaker, we're here debating it again. I'm hopeful that we can get to the "sold" and move this one off the docket. We've got to get it off the docket, Speaker. We need to be talking about other things that are very important. This one is important, but it could have been done. There were three parties; all agreed the last time. Why are we continuing to bring this back to the House to debate it yet again when all three parties are agreeing? Speaker, I think it's because they don't really want to talk about the boondoggles of their 10-year tenure, things like the gas plants, things like eHealth, things like the billions of dollars that aren't going to front-line health care, to cancer research and treatment, to schools—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Expensive energy.

1600

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes, expensive energy is another one of those boondoggles that we continually fight.

Speaker, it's shameful that we've had to come back and do this all over again when it could truly be there. It's shameful because we're not serving the people who truly need it. Those people who need co-op housing are being left in the lurch because this government chooses not to move legislation through when they could. They chose very specifically to prorogue this House when this legislation could have been passed and expedited through.

I almost want to say that this one should be called the patience of Job act, because it has been since 2007—

Interjection: The 2003 election.

Mr. Bill Walker: It was a 2003 election promise; you're correct.

And we don't want to get on to the health tax—"I will not raise taxes. I will not raise the health care tax. I will not waste money on gas plants"—but I digress.

The question I ask is, why has it taken so long to get this bill rolling? The Liberals are the only group that can answer that in this House. Perhaps they've been sidetracked, but that doesn't matter. If they had the will, they still could have moved this through the House. We again have all-party support. We want to ensure that this

legislation goes through, because they're purporting their numbers—and I know it's tough to believe a Liberal number. They could purport, Speaker—a new Speaker. Congratulations, Mr. Garfield.

They purport a million-dollar savings, just in the litigation costs that could be saved. The Auditor General brought out a report today that brought up an \$85-million different answer, compared to a number that they put out, Speaker—so I'm hopeful that in this case, it will. But I think at the end of the day, what we want to ensure is if there truly is a million dollars saved, it goes back into housing, co-op housing; not into paying more lawyers to defend their gas plant scandals—because we're already hearing about \$600-an-hour lawyers to try to defend them in that boondoggle.

We need to ensure that we move this forward as quickly as we can. We want those disputes to get outside of the courts so that those truly needy people can get their issues in front of the courts. But we also need balance in this bill. We need to ensure that everyone is consulted. The tenants need to have their say, the landlords need to have their say so that it's balanced legislation, so that we're truly serving all of the people of Ontario.

The concern—and there's no detail in yet another one of the bills that they've put in front of us—is about how we will actually manage potential nuisance claims, because now what they've opened up the door to is, anyone who's disgruntled can virtually run through the door and hold up those courts, which again negates the people who truly do have big issues that need to be resolved and things that are going to impact their lives right off the bat. So we need to ensure that that happens.

Landlords like my constituent Ron Steffler in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound struggle to collect back rent and to evict bad tenants. That's not fair because, in essence, someone who's not prepared to agree to the terms and conditions and honour those—Speaker, that's just not right. It's a fundamental tenet of what we in Ontario believe in. You sign an agreement; you hold on to that agreement.

In this case, what we need to ensure is that someone like Mr. Steffler and his wife, who have owned a small seven-unit apartment for 12 years, home to mostly senior residents, which they've run with very little problem until recently—one of their newer tenants owes six months in back rent.

Mr. Steffler writes:

"We followed the letter of law with his notice to move out, but we are now being told that we have to spend more money to have him evicted ... and pay a lawyer to do paperwork for us. We are told that we have to carry him at our expense until he is evicted. How fair is that?" They've done everything right.

"Please do not tell us to take him to Small Claims Court because that system does not work here in Ontario. Just another thing that should be looked at and changes made.

"Minister, where are our rights as landlords? This is a seniors' building and yes, we should have known better than to [allow this tenant in].

"Why do we have no rights? We work hard to give our senior tenants everything they need, and now they are threatening to move out because of this [one bad tenant]." That's not right either, Speaker.

"Why do we have to keep spending money to have this [bad tenant] removed? We own this building and yet we have no rights. We do all the repairs and pay all the bills and yet we have no rights. When will this minister look into this matter and make changes to also protect the landlords?

"We keep losing our seniors to low-cost housing that the taxes from this apartment help to run and yet we cannot qualify to have one or two of our units available for low-cost housing. None of the previous ministers hear our plea ... or perhaps they just don't care!

"Please look into the Landlord and Tenant Act and make necessary changes to help us.

"Thank you for any help that you can give."

Speaker, a I said earlier, it needs balance. You need both sides to come to the table and ensure that it's going to serve both sides of this matter. You need tenants who are going to respect and uphold the law of the land and honour an agreement that they've signed and you need the tenants to have the ability to hold them to that. You need tenants that can hold the landlord if they're not providing the proper services to them as well.

The Ainslie Wood co-op in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound was built in the late 1980s. This was the decade when most of the co-op construction was happening across Canada. Interestingly, this building wave coincided with the wave of baby boomers who were moving into adulthood and beginning to raise families. The homes in the Ainslie Wood Housing Co-Op in Owen Sound are a little more comfortable, thanks to the federal government's economic stimulus program—\$384,000 from the \$1 billion announced for the social housing renovation and retrofit fund was spent on new siding and replacement windows at the 32 units to make them more energy-efficient. They're going to need that energy efficiency because under that Liberal government, energy rates will be 5% more, and they'll triple over their 10-year tenure. It's unbelievable and it's certainly unfair to those people that are in places like co-op housing and can't afford these exorbitant and continually increasing rates.

The complex also includes a small playground and a community garden. We need to support these kinds of programs, but we need to do it in a fair and balanced manner. Again, if I can go back to my earlier comments, this could have already been enacted and could already be helping those people who have the need in co-op housing. Yet, we sit here today and we continue to debate, ad nauseam, almost, on this bill. I think again it really is so that they don't have to dispute the real issues that they've created in this province and where they take us.

This bill was introduced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Kathleen Wynne, who is now our Premier. However, it fell victim to Dalton McGuinty's prorogation. You would have thought that this Premier,

since she introduced it, would have stepped up and said to her cabinet and to her caucus, "We're expediting this. This needs to get enacted and it needs to do it without any of this frivolous debate. Let's move on from this." But it didn't happen.

The delay has caused co-op members potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars in unnecessary court costs as the rules the bill was intended to fix remain in place. So, if they're so concerned about all these needs of the people in lineups, why aren't they expediting this? Why is this not moving through? Why are they purposely bringing it back here to have to be debated for the entire course? They have the ability, as you know, that they could have expedited this and had it already into place.

Contrary to the Premier's stated desire to work with the opposition, this new bill contains an unnecessary amendment that will open the floodgates to potentially nuisance applications to the Landlord and Tenant Board, causing turmoil in a system that's already horrendously backlogged. This amendment will harm both landlords and tenants as it will further hamper the Landlord and Tenant Board's ability to hear cases in a timely manner.

We need to ensure that these pieces of legislation are brought to the table and that they're thought well out before. If they'd have consulted us—there are a number of issues that I'm dealing with in my riding—one, most recently, the commercial native fishing agreement. They've rammed it out, with no consultation from anyone else in the room—any stakeholders. They've done this with the horse racing agreement. They've done this with the Green Energy Act. We're supposed to—the 107 of us—work on behalf of all the collective population of Ontario. If they'd just let us into the room, we would gladly work with them. We would gladly come to the table and offer differing points of view so that there could actually be good legislation tabled and we wouldn't have to be continually coming back and re-addressing everything and spending all of this time in waste and duplication of effort. Just think of all the money that could be going to co-op housing if we just did things the right way the first time, if we weren't creating boondoggles that we had to hire high-priced lawyers for, if we weren't spending a third of our budget almost on the debt financing cost over their 10-year tenure of spend, spend, spend. Just think of the co-op housing. Just think of the hospitals we could have. Think of the cancer care we could have. Think of the front-line resources for our teachers and our greatest asset, our students, those pages that sit in front of you, Speaker, who deserve better. They deserve more.

This is a bill that is necessary; absolutely. With some amendments, I believe our caucus is prepared to certainly support it, but it does need amendments. We should have done it for the first time back in 2007 and it should have already been out of here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to welcome our guests here again today from the co-op housing federation. I'm sorry that you need to be here again.

The bill that we were going to be debating today changed about three times in the last 24 hours. When I got here this morning, it was okay. So it's the second reading or third reading, and I hope I don't have to speak to it again for an hour.

1610

This is a small change in the way that evictions are dealt with in the courts. We've been talking about this bill probably for 18 or 19 hours now. It's an important issue, certainly to the tenants and to the co-op housing federation, because it's going to save a whole lot of money in going through the courts. But I think that we really should move along and get this passed, and then we should start dealing with the real issues of housing in this province: the fact that there are almost 200,000 files, people, families sitting on a wait-list, the fact that we need to have bills introduced to deal with vacancy decontrol and inclusionary zoning, sustainable funding and multi-year funding.

I did a round table last week in Kitchener—or in London, sorry. I met with 13 or 14 people from various areas of housing. They shared the fact that the funding isn't sustainable—it isn't for a long enough period of time for them to plan—and that there needs to be a lot more flexibility in the funding model, because we cannot use a cookie-cutter approach to housing programs that meet the needs of each community. So they certainly asked me to bring that back to the government when they're getting into their budget and dealing with housing programs that will be coming forward for the next fiscal year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Just a few comments on the remarks by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound: Of course, those are his remarks. I totally don't agree with them, but they are his remarks, and we have to respect that.

I think we are dealing with a bill that, if finally approved, will go a long way in solving some of the problems that co-op housing and their residents, tenants, have been dealing with for a long time. It has taken a long time, Speaker. But as I said before, we should not be prisoners of the past. I think we should move on, look ahead and see how we can alleviate some of the difficulties that are existing presently.

When we speak about housing, let me say that I've been here perhaps longer than most members, and I have to say that I have been very fortunate to have been a PA to two or three ministers responsible for housing, and I know what it has gone through with this government and past governments and also in dealing with the federal government. We should not—absolutely not, Speaker—as individual members of this House, let the federal government go scot-free when it comes to this important sector in our society, such as housing, when they threaten time after time to get completely out of supporting housing. As we all know very well in this House, Speaker, this is such an important area in our social life here that

we cannot support it, either locally, municipally, provincially or federally, unless there is some help from all sides.

So I do hope that in our submission, Speaker, we could always keep this present: that housing is one of those very important aspects in our society, and it needs co-operation from all levels of government as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to speak. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, as one of the comments I heard, is a great auctioneer. I've seen him in action, and he's typically—I think we're going to have to move him east there. There will be a job in the east, as we look for new jobs.

As I said before, it's interesting to hear about the urgency to pass this bill, a bill that was a promise in 2003. It's the fourth time it's coming before us. I don't see a lot of interest today; I don't see quorum here again. We called quorum once, and we can't get enough people from the government to even listen to the comments that are being made. I guess they're all out putting a spin on the Auditor General's report today, which talked about how, even though they knew the cost was more than what they were telling the public, they clearly stuck to their guns and followed through on the—I can't say the word "misleading," but not being forthright with some of the information coming through. This is money that we're seeing the people of Ontario having to pay—hard-earned tax money squandered. We see legal advice being ignored. I guess it's hard to get an agreement with somebody when the cost looks like it's around \$7 million and the government hands you \$15 million. It would be hard to say no to something like that, but maybe it shows some of the negotiating skills this government actually has, or maybe just what they feel about taxpayers' money. They're willing to pay double what the guy is asking to get a quick deal.

It's time to start putting some of the issues before this province that people really care about. As an auctioneer might say, "Going, going, gone." Just take the deal and be happy with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: When we look back at some of the comments that have been mentioned today—the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound points out that he is an auctioneer. Quite honestly, that explains a lot on several levels, but the comments around working together to hold the federal government to account for their true lack of leadership on the housing portfolio—I think this is something we should all take a leadership role in.

Perhaps that's one of the good things about this debate. In some respects, we're getting up and we've made a lot of the same comments before. But I think we have to actually approach the issue of affordable housing and look at it through an economic lens, look at it through a social justice lens and certainly through an access-to-justice lens. I think when we look at what this

actual amendment will do—because I do think it is important, when you are having a debate, that you should actually talk about what the amendment is actually about.

The court system—and this is why we're here today—is so expensive for co-op members who, in most cases, need to use a lawyer, and if they don't qualify for legal aid, they likely won't have the financial resources to contest an eviction. The tribunal system would be much fairer to members facing eviction. Cases would be decided faster, and the member would only be evicted if the landlord or the tenant board found that the facts justified an eviction.

The context is that for nine years the co-op housing movement has been asking for some action. This amendment actually does something good, so let's work together to make it stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We return to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to thank all those that spoke, especially the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I would like to get a bit more detail on the first comment she made, but we know this is question period, not answer period, so we'll do that on a sidebar. I think she's getting her 10 minutes in, and it's ironic, because I wanted to hit on her and she ended up hitting on me, so we'll just leave it there for now.

I thank the member from Welland, and I'm resolute with her on this issue: She does not want to have this discussion ongoing over and over and over again—talk about Groundhog Day. Without a shadow of a doubt, none of us want to be here talking about this; this could already be in there.

I appreciate the remarks of the minister responsible for seniors. I think the greatest thing he could do is help the actual seniors he's representing; he could expedite this through. He tried to make a bit of a slam at our federal colleagues, but I have to say that they put \$384,000 into my riding to actually help with co-op housing. I'm not certain what he can stand up and say they have done on behalf of seniors and co-op housing in my riding, other than wait and make sure we come back three times for this bill.

The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—a very astute man in his remarks—brings something to light: The Liberals talk about wanting to do this with urgency. It's a failed election promise from 2003. Then they brought it to the floor in 2004 and couldn't get the job done. What is going on here? Are they incompetent, or are they just not wanting to do it? We have to ask that question. They brought it back last year, but then things got a little bit grey; there was a bit of vapour in the air, I think, and they decided to prorogue the House.

They could have had this all done and through, helping people in co-op housing, but they choose not to do it because they don't want us debating things in this House like the gas plant fiasco, the eHealth boondoggle, the Ornge scandal and the Green Energy Act that's an

absolutely abysmal experiment. They're trying to spin the AG's report today; he's come out already and said how much money has been wasted. We can't afford any more of this Liberal nonsense.

1620

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's a pleasure to stand and speak on this bill. Bill 14 amends the Residential Tenancies Act and Co-operative Corporations Act to move certain co-op tenure disputes—like arrears, late rent payments and willful damage—from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board. I recognize that affordable housing is an issue that's faced by people all across this province, and co-operative housing is a very small subsection of that issue. It's a major concern in the GTA and southern Ontario, but it's not so much of an issue where I live in northwestern Ontario. Part of my job as the member for Kenora-Rainy River is to bring the perspective of Kenora-Rainy River to this debate, so what I will be focusing on are some of the shortcomings of this bill.

Some of the issues that this bill really doesn't affect are: access to affordable housing, the hidden costs associated with affordable housing such as hydro, some of the renovations to houses that are owned by the working poor, First Nations access to housing, and homelessness funding. These are all really big issues in Kenora-Rainy River.

When it comes to the lack of affordable housing, we—and when I say “we,” I mean the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs—recently held some pre-budget consultation meetings in Thunder Bay. At that one meeting—it's singular—there were a number of presenters who came and brought some of the stories and issues that are being faced by people in the northwest. One of the issues that was raised is that there have been no new houses built—affordable housing, subsidized housing—in Thunder Bay in the last 20 years. Right now, their waiting list is at 1,420, and that is for a population of about 110,000 people. If you can imagine, 26% of the people who are on that waiting list are on the urgent wait-list, and those are people who are in dire need of affordable housing right now. This bill doesn't do anything to help those people. I venture to say that this is probably the single biggest issue for those families and those individuals who are on that waiting list. When you don't have access to safe and affordable housing, it makes it very difficult to pull yourself out of poverty. It's difficult to get a job and to maintain that job, and this bill doesn't do anything to help those folks.

The other thing that this bill doesn't do is help with the hidden costs that are associated with affordable housing. As I mentioned, in the northwest probably the single biggest cost associated with affordable housing is that of our electricity rates. It's not uncommon for people who are on social assistance or people who are the beneficiaries of the maximum subsidy for subsidized housing to pay about \$85 rent per month, but it's also not

uncommon for those people who are paying \$85 a month rent to pay upwards of \$1,000 a month for their hydro bill. How does that balance out? How is that any real savings? When you look at it in other communities across Ontario, they might be paying \$1,000 for their rent, but they're only paying about \$85 for their electricity bill.

The other thing I need to mention about that is, in the northwest, electricity is an essential. Not surprisingly, it's colder in the northwest. When I come down to Toronto to participate in the House proceedings, I often joke that it's t-shirt weather down here. That's because I'm used to a colder climate at home, where in the winter it's anywhere between minus 20 to minus 45. So it's a joke that it's the tropics down here.

Interjection.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yes, but we don't get a break on our hydro. Like I said, that's why there are a lot of people who are paying about \$1,000 a month.

The other thing is, for the subsidized housing that we do have, a lot of it was built quickly, it was built cheaply and it was built a number of years ago—30 or 40 years ago. We have units that are poorly insulated. We have units that are heated with electric heat. Again, it's no surprise that those electricity bills are so high.

The other thing I'd like to talk about that this bill doesn't cover is, as I said, the hidden costs associated—or I should say, some of the costs that are associated with houses that are owned by the working poor. This is something that I've seen firsthand.

There was one woman who came to me, probably about three years ago now, when I worked for the former MPP. She was a woman who worked at Tim Hortons. She worked every single day. I believe she walked across town to go to her job. She had the misfortune of having her furnace die in the middle of winter. She had a tremendously difficult time trying to access the funds that were necessary to fix this furnace. She had to rely on space heaters. She lived in a mobile home, and so this was obviously a huge safety risk, but also she had to rely on the one program that really existed out there to help her, and that was the CMHC one. She found that she made about—I think it was \$300 more than what the cut-off was. She made just over \$20,000. This is a woman who, as I said, got up every day, she worked, she did everything that she could to take care of herself, but it still wasn't enough. And this bill doesn't do anything to help those people who are struggling.

The other thing that this bill doesn't cover: It doesn't help First Nations people who, in the north, are struggling to access even just basic housing. About a year ago, we heard about the problems that are experienced by the people who live in the community of Attawapiskat. One of the things I've been trying to communicate to people is that Attawapiskat isn't a unique situation. I have 22 remote First Nation communities in my riding and I've got about 22 Attawapiskats. These are communities that are far removed. The only way into the community is by plane. There is a very short winter road season when the communities do try to bring in the resources, but still,

there's just so much need. We've got overcrowding. We've got houses in the more northern part of my riding, where the temperatures can dip below minus 50, that don't have doors. They have tarps for doors. They don't have windows. You have, as I said, multiple families living in one residence. It's completely inhumane. We have an opportunity to address some of these issues and we're not. We're not addressing these issues.

The last issue I wanted to talk about that isn't covered by this bill is homelessness funding. In the last provincial budget, there was a decision to combine homelessness with housing, so the funding for emergency shelters is now coming through housing instead of Ontario Works. And in the Kenora district, the money that they received was divided into three separate homelessness shelters. There was Sioux Lookout's Out of the Cold shelter, the Red Lake shelter and the Kenora shelter.

In Sioux Lookout's case, they received \$87,000, and this is down from receiving \$102,000 in per diems in 2012. This is a shortfall of \$15,000. The other shortfall is, there was an HPI grant. At the height of it, they received \$40,000, but last year they received \$30,000. This year, they've only received \$26,000. So again, this is a shortfall of \$15,000. They have a total operating shortfall of \$30,000. And again, in Sioux Lookout, 99% of the clients are aboriginal, so there's a lot of need.

I'm under no illusion that there are endless amounts of money out there. I know that there isn't. But it's about making strategic investments because the people of our province are the future of our province, and we need to make sure that everybody has a level playing field and everybody is able to contribute and live their lives to the fullest extent. I would like to see us move our focus, shift our focus, to make these investments in people, because I know that people get that much back and more. It's just a matter of shuffling those priorities. It's a matter of not spending money on all of these scandals. I know we can do it. We do have the power to solve our problems.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M. Phil McNeely: Je suis content d'avoir la chance aujourd'hui de parler sur la Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois. C'est le projet de loi 14.

J'ai parlé en anglais il y a quelques semaines en support de la loi. Je pense que c'est très important. Je suis content d'avoir la Fédération de l'habitation coopérative du Canada ici, M. Dale Reagan, M. Harvey Cooper et d'autres personnes qui sont ici pour supporter la loi.

On est prêt à la passer. On est prêt à faciliter d'avoir la loi en place. C'est le temps d'arrêter de parler comme la loi est si importante, mais on voit qu'il n'y a rien de fait. On continue de parler et continue de parler.

C'est très important pour bâtir des maisons abordables en Ontario. C'est quelque chose qu'on devrait supporter. C'est quelque chose qui devrait passer ici à la Chambre, aller en comité et être loi.

Alors, c'est le temps de finir de parler sur ça. Si les oppositions sont en faveur de la loi, on devrait la passer. On devrait faire les démarches nécessaires pour qu'eux autres puissent continuer le bon ouvrage qu'ils font en Ontario avec les habitations coopératives.

Alors, on devrait être ensemble, on devrait tous supporter ça. On devrait passer la loi et arrêter de parler de tous les efforts à faire. Si c'est important pour vous, à l'opposition, c'est important pour nous autres. C'est très important au monde qui sont ici depuis quelque jours et qui voient en l'acte quelque chose qui peut servir beaucoup de monde avec des habitations coopératives au Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to make a few comments on the member from Kenora-Rainy River and her comments on Bill 14. I think one of the things that was really important, if you listened carefully to her comments, is the fact that she actually mentioned the difference, and one size doesn't fit all here in the province of Ontario. I know I've been in her riding a few times and I understand that—I think she mentioned in her comments that there were something like 22 remote First Nations in that particular riding. The riding is bigger than a lot of European countries. In fact, I understand it's bigger than Labrador and Newfoundland combined, that riding itself. So it's a huge job being the representative there.

But when you talk about things like housing, I mean, it's so remote from what other people expect in affordable housing or co-operative housing. I can't imagine there being a co-operative housing project in any one of the 22 remote First Nations communities.

So she brings her comments, and maybe this would go through the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, though, but these are the kinds of things that you always have to kind of weigh in on. When this bill goes off to committee in a couple of days' time or whenever we finish debating it, it will be interesting to see if we can get some of those comments back. In the end, it's all Ontario. It all fits into our planning and our affordable housing.

We heard some comments today about the federal government. I know there's pressure on the federal government to have a national housing strategy. Overall, I think it's important that we always keep in mind what we see in the GTA or maybe in southern Ontario or central Ontario is not really what fits all of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Kenora-Rainy River as well for highlighting the challenges that she faces in that riding and that her constituents face.

I had an opportunity in January to go to Thunder Bay. I haven't spent a lot of time in the north, but it was minus 48 the day that I was in Thunder Bay, and I had to go and buy—coming from southern Niagara—boots, a toque and some gloves. I was very ill-prepared for the weather

there. Housing, hydro and heat—those issues are of great importance to people who live in the north.

The vacancy rate, I was told when I was there in Thunder Bay, was less than 1%. Although there were some jobs on the books—some manufacturing; some of the industries had some jobs—there was nowhere for anybody to live once they got there. So it is a big problem for them.

I was told by people at the round table on housing that there's a great need there for more detox beds in their community, that many people with substance abuse problems are recycling through the hospital and then back out into the community. Because there isn't enough housing and there are no housing supports available to assist them if they even are able to achieve housing, it really is just a continual recycling. As she said, with the population of 10,000, to have 1,400 on a wait-list—that's 14% of her population waiting for housing in that area. So the need is very great.

Programs that worked aren't necessarily continued, and that was one of the messages I heard as well: Don't fix what isn't broken. The community start-up benefits and the discretionary funding benefits were actually working for that community, but with the cuts to them, they're now at a loss.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait toujours plaisir de me lever et de parler au sujet des coopératives d'habitation.

I was reflecting on who is living in co-op housing in my area. Sometimes it's seniors. We have a few co-op housing where seniors live there. We have, around Ottawa U and La Cité collégiale, some co-ops where students live. We have students who are wealthy, but we have students also who are not wealthy. They're a great addition to the co-op housing area in my riding.

I have also a large community of Inuit in my riding. We have a few co-ops where the Inuit are living. They are beautiful and they're built in accordance to their needs. I also have different groups of First Nations in my riding. We have the beautiful Wabano Centre. So we have co-ops for First Nations. We have co-ops for young families. Often they use the co-op to help them to save money to buy their first home.

Co-op housing, for me, is the best model for affordable housing. It's a model where people do act like it was their own home, and there is a great deal of friendship, support—they support each other—and also they collaborate to do the different tasks of the co-op housing complex.

Again, I hope that we will stop talking about it and redirect it to the committee for progress.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Kenora—Rainy River has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members of this House who took the time to respond to my comments that I made in the House.

I wanted to just kind of wrap up with saying this: Since January, when Premier Wynne was elected, we've

heard a lot of talk about how we now have a social justice Premier. But I'm wondering—and I know that the people of my riding are wondering—where's the vision? Where are the goals and the plans? We're seeing these bills so far that are just regurgitated from the last session. Where's the action? I'm not trying to be unduly hard on the Premier, but we live in hard times, and we are looking to this government for help.

1640

From the people who I've talked to, from one end of Kenora—Rainy River to the other end—the whole 350,000 square kilometres—I can tell you that the people in the north have been doing without for a long time. But they also recognize that we live in difficult times, that money is tight and that we all have to make sacrifices. I hear that from people, but at the end of the day, we still have needs too.

We need to see action on these very fundamental needs, and the biggest thing that we could get some help with, when it comes to housing, is help with electricity. There needs to be a recognition that in this province, electricity, especially in the north, is as basic and as fundamental as having a roof over your head, having water and having food. That is the area where we need the biggest change, the biggest shift, because I am seeing seniors who have decent pensions but they just can't afford to heat their houses anymore.

We really need some movement on there, and we need the Premier to live up to the promise of being a social justice Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today and speak a little on Bill 14, an Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

I'm going to be quite honest with you, Mr. Speaker: I don't know a lot about this act. It's not my critic's portfolio, but it ties in to my critic's portfolio a lot.

I'm looking at some of the things that have come out from the government, and their news release, when they released it—"Strengthening Co-op Housing Protections: New Ontario Government Remains Committed to Streamlining Dispute Resolution"—and a lot of other comments around it as well.

But I'm a little shocked at the words "new Ontario government." I'm not sure where that actually comes from. If you prorogue the House for four months, then you're a new government?

I would look at it as a little bit different. I would look at it as the same old group of people, the same old worn-out bunch of people that are tired. We've seen today, with the Mississauga power plant—I've got the report in my hands. I'm not sure what it cost in the end, but it looks like about \$85 million—taxpayer dollars—were used to prop up—

Mr. Norm Miller: Extra.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: —extra dollars were used to close the plant, and that's taxpayer dollars.

I wanted to go back—I'm not going to pick on the government any more than that. I really wanted to talk about housing in general. It all boils into what I think we on this side of the House believe are the most fundamental, basic things we need. We talk continually about how the best social program is a job; that is the one thing. When you have 600,000 people that are not working in Ontario, that's why we talk so much about job creation and economic development in that area—whatever we can do to create jobs, because any time you get a person with a job, the first thing they want to do is they want to get really good or more decent housing.

I can tell you, Speaker, each and every year I have pre-budget consultations in my riding. We never get to have a standing committee on the Legislative Assembly come to Simcoe county, even, so we have our own pre-budget meetings and we actually talk. We get groups of people in, the same as you would at a standing committee, and they get 10 minutes, and we always listen to the concerns of the people in the riding. I do it at each end of the riding, one in Orillia and one in Midland.

I can tell you, Speaker, that the biggest issue every year—in fact, it's growing every year—is affordable housing and homelessness. This year was the worst ever. I think I had a total of 40 deputations in the two different hearings—maybe 25 or 26 the one day, and 14 or 15 the next day, in Midland—and each and every time it came down to affordable housing.

We have a number of groups that are looking to expand their programs in our community. I think of a shelter in Midland now wanting to add their second co-operative unit. The first one was basically built with private sector money, and now they're looking at provincial and federal help on the next phase. I'm not sure when that's going to happen, but certainly they're out there doing their very best.

We have another project that right now is run out of Knox Presbyterian Church in Midland. It's called Out of the Cold. I'm just amazed at how many people they serve there, almost on a nightly basis. Twenty or 30 people from somewhere in the county—maybe as far away as Mr. Miller's riding—will come for a night just to have shelter. In the Orillia end of the riding, I have the same kind of problems with people looking for decent shelter and some type of affordable housing.

So it's something that, as parliamentarians, whether we have our budget and we have these fancy bills—I think this is the third time this bill has been introduced; that's the impression I'm under. You know what? We really and truly have to pay special attention to affordable housing and those who just do not have everything. Now, we'll find it in different ways. I know from our perspective that we're looking at job creation and economic development; trying to get basic jobs and getting people to have their own affordable housing.

But it's amazing: One of things I'm really surprised at is how we pass one bill, and it's supposed to be, you know, what everybody wants, and the folks are here today who are very supportive of this bill. But then we do

other things in this House that will drive the price of housing up.

I think no further than the debate here of my opposition day motion on the College of Trades. That is going to drive the cost of housing up. I don't know what you have to say to people to get them to understand that. When you add more and more enforcement, more and more permits, memberships, etc., the price of housing goes up. The College of Trades is even impacting Habitat for Humanity. They may not be able to use volunteers on the job. When I look at that, when I look at what's happening, I'm thinking, why are we so determined to pass one piece of legislation and make it an emergency, and on the other hand ignore an opposition day motion like what I had last week?

You know, everyone thinks it's fine, the College of Trades is great. There are 91 people working there now. They're going to hire 150 enforcement cops. Another new level of bureaucracy that is completely not needed in the province of Ontario, but it will drive the price of all housing up, whether it's a high-rise condominium project, regular housing, co-operative housing. They're all going to have an impact on housing because of one new bureaucracy. Whether it's 1% or 2% or 10%, they all cost a lot of money.

We look at affordable housing. The people in the audience can say for sure that there's really no such thing as constructing affordable housing. It costs so much per square foot: the lumber, the drywall, the paint, the foundations—whatever it may be—all costs so much per square foot. Whether you put in an expensive cabinet—obviously, in some homes, the kitchens are much more expensive, and you can have a more affordable type, but in the end, it costs a lot of money to do any kind of housing, and it's a challenge for any government.

There's one thing I also want to say. All these programs we've brought out over the years, whether it was the federal government or the provincial government—and our party was as bad as any of them—with any of the projects we were involved in, there was always the concern, why does it take so long for the approvals? My God, you know, you'll start a program and you'll see an announcement made—say, a budget announcement—and you won't see any construction on a particular project for three or four years minimum. I've got a number of those in my riding; I can think of a couple in particular.

I want to pay a special thank you to Ken McMullen, who ran a seniors' project in Orillia. I thought Mr. McMullen was going to have a stroke or coronary with the worry he went through and the work he did on that particular project. It was years of worry and concern, but he finally made it through. He got the proper people, and now it's a huge success. But I didn't think it needed to be that complex. It seemed that that project started out as something that made so much common sense—he had a building, the money was there—but by the time all the different consultants and architects and approval authorities made it through, it drove the price of the project up. But second of all, it was the timing. The people who

originally thought they would move into that particular unit—a lot of them never did. Some of them who originally wanted to move into that particular unit because it was seniors' affordable housing actually passed on.

1650

The list goes on and on. I've only got a couple more minutes here, but I did want to say that what's really important here is that for us as politicians, whether you're in the government, the opposition or the third party, housing is a top priority. How you get there is a matter of what the policies of the particular party are. We on this side of the House, you know what we think. We think the more we can do for job creation—streamlining red tape to create jobs—that's the way we're going to get more people with jobs. That's the way they're actually going to end up with housing of their own. Other people look at it in different ways. I just think overall, as a Legislature, we can't turn our backs on people either. We have to be determined to create those jobs. Where those jobs come from, I don't know, but as I look at some of the people I've met over the past year from all across the province in different communities as I've travelled with the College of Trades stuff, you know what? I think there's a lot of wonderful people in Ontario. There's a lot of people who just want that first chance to do anything, a lot of young people particularly. They don't want to be finding their opportunities out in British Columbia or Newfoundland or whatever; they want to find their home right here in Ontario and get good, affordable housing and a good lifestyle for themselves and their families right here in their province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's actually a pleasure to comment on this bill—

Interjection: Again.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, again. I'll get to 10 minutes eventually.

Just to follow the member from Simcoe North, I appreciate the fact that—and I think we're in agreement, actually, on a number of issues. Affordable housing—safe, stable, secure housing—is a key factor in getting the economy back on track and getting people back to work.

The issue, though, which is of interest to me is that people who don't have housing have a very hard time getting work. Just before Christmas, I was at an anti-poverty meeting and I was talking to a young woman, 35, who actually said to me point blank, "I cannot apply for a job because I don't have an address," and an employer looks at her very differently than they would if she had a résumé with a solid address and contact information. That's why organizations like the Working Centre in Kitchener—Waterloo are so powerful. It actually gives some stability—an address, an email and a phone line to actually try to apply for work.

I actually commend the member from Simcoe North for doing your own pre-budget committee. I've been on the finance committee this year; what an interesting

experience it's been. I can tell you, we went to Windsor, Timmins, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, two sessions here, and then I went back to my own riding and I got a rebocall from the finance minister saying, "Why don't you come to this town hall?" You can imagine my surprise. I know it's because I'm new that some of these things are surprising, but it was definitely—I'm not the only one in the committee that finds this year—first of all, we don't even have a budget date, right? How can you really engage in a truly consultative process when you don't have a date?

Housing—a key issue from an economic development perspective. I look forward to commenting further later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 14. It appears that people have a lot to say about it, and that's good, I think, because it allows people to express their opinions.

Some of the opinions I've heard so far in this debate I agree with very strongly, and others I may not be so fond of. But if you take the political philosophy out of this, I think what you see is a bill that's very practical. It's a bill that enables a sector of our economy that provides housing from the non-profit sector—it allows them to operate more efficiently. It allows some legislative changes to take place, that would make sure that the system, when disputes do arise—and disputes arise in a number of areas of our economy, and in housing and social services as well over the years—it gives the co-op sector the ability to deal with those in a much more efficient way, in a much more cost-effective way and in a very open way, for those people who are members of the co-op.

It seems to me that all three parties should be in favour of this bill and it seems to me that we should be moving to a vote on it very quickly, but it appears that some people still want to talk about it. But it's going to allow co-operative boards to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to resolve tenure disputes that are currently provided for under the RTA, the Residential Tenancies Act. That seems to me to be a very practical step forward, Mr. Speaker. It's going to make, as I said, the system a lot more efficient than it is today. It's going to free up some funds for the co-op itself. It's more cost-effective if there's money to be spent on repairs or if there's money to be spent on other areas in the co-op projects, and certainly they'll have those funds available because they're not having to spend it in the way they are today.

I suggest we move ahead on this; that we all say what we've got to say, move it on to the committee and then pass it, and it's done with.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I too am very pleased to rise and speak to the comments that were shared just earlier by our member from Simcoe North. Actually, I really admire this member for the effort he takes to understand the issues, talk to constituents, to make it real and to

challenge the nonsense that happens day in and day out in this House. Some of the nonsense is related to that whole concept that he drew our attention to, the fact that the Wynne Liberal government is trying to portray themselves as a new government. Meanwhile, we're debating today Bill 14, which is actually a very old bill. What's new is old again and what's old is new again. It's just an endless cycle of spinning wheels or spinning, if you will, instead of addressing concerns that really need to be spoken about in this House.

Let's talk about folks needing a hands-up in co-operative housing. We all can agree, and we've heard this from every single member in this House debating this issue, that affordability is really, really important. As I said, people are looking for a hand up, but instead this Wynne Liberal government seems to have a heavy hand that keeps pushing people down. On one side, they're talking about affordable housing, and on the other side, they're bringing through policy and bringing through regulation that is making living in Ontario next to impossible.

I just want to share with you an example. Energy bills are going through the roof. The most regular calls I get in my constituency offices are from constituents that are having trouble meeting day-to-day bills. Just today, I found it quite interesting that in the Auditor General's report, he talks about the cancellation of gas plant costs being covered by global adjustment charges that are recovered on ratepayers' monthly electricity bills.

This government can't have it both ways, and, Speaker, we need to get this passed so we can address the real issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments..

Ms. Cindy Forster: Back in 2009, I think it was, the Auditor General talked about the role of government and the lack of affordable housing here in the province. He talked about the lack of access; the lack of staff, from the ministry point of view, to monitor and move it along; the lack of a provincial strategy to ensure that there were enough numbers of affordable housing units in the province and that those units were actually well maintained and repaired. That was four years ago, and we still haven't made great strides between 2009 and 2013 to have better access to affordable housing units.

We all know that when we have people in safe, well-maintained housing units, it actually improves people's health. It reduces hospital visits and hospital costs. It actually reduces the need for shelters and some need for food banks. It reduces correctional costs. It reduces policing costs. So if we funnelled some of those dollars that we're spending in all of those areas into building some more housing and spending some more money on affordable housing support programs, we probably would save money at the end of the day.

1700

A large percentage of inmates who are in our correctional facilities in this province have mental health issues, and they probably wouldn't have found themselves in

prison had they had an affordable housing unit available to them and had the actual supportive housing model in place so that when they had issues, they were dealt with at the time. Unfortunately, that hasn't been happening. The funding is actually being reduced year over year. So I think we need to move to the Housing First model, and we'll see some great results here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments for this round.

I return to the member for Simcoe North for his reply.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to thank the members from Kitchener-Waterloo, Oakville, Huron-Bruce and Welland for their comments today.

I just want to sum up with what I said earlier, which is that we believe strongly that housing is of huge importance to the people in Ontario, but what gets them to that housing is good employment and a good job opportunity and something that's secure for the future.

I think the member for Welland summed it up well when she mentioned that when someone has their own residence how important that is to their self-esteem, to their mental health, to their physical health; having that confidence that you can afford to have that rent or that mortgage paid every month and that you're on solid ground and you can move forward. So many people who have done that in the past have moved on to really, really great things in the future, and they've set the example for their children as well.

Obviously, having this legislation improved is an important part of the picture. But what's really important, I think, more than anything, is that we look at the whole picture and make sure we concentrate on good employment opportunities for people, getting rid of red tape, getting rid of bureaucracy at whatever level we can, so that we can focus on people getting a job which they can go to each and every week, come back with a decent paycheque and be able to build homes, buy homes, rent homes and buy cars etc., and increase their self-esteem and be more important and better taxpayers for the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Mr. Speaker, the bill amends the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and makes consequential amendments to the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, and the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act, 2010. The key thing that it does is it really puts into place the rules that apply for tenants of a regular rental situation and for people who use co-ops.

Most of the amendments are for the purpose of creating a procedure in the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, for non-profit housing co-operatives to regain possession of a member unit occupied by a person after

his or her membership and occupancy rights in the co-operative terminate or expire. Currently, non-profit housing co-operatives can regain possession of a member unit only by obtaining a writ of possession from the Superior Court of Justice. That's a very expensive process, so obviously moving it into a process where it would be—the Landlord and Tenant Act is the place it should be. Certainly, the ministry estimated the cost of resolving these co-op disputes in the courts at \$3,000 to \$5,000 each and pegged the annual legal cost to co-op members of approximately 300 cases heard every year in the courts at about \$1 million.

As we've heard, all parties are supportive of this. It has been a long process getting to this point. Of course, the Legislature was prorogued, which ended the process the last time this bill was debated in the Legislature.

I understand that there have been some minor changes made since the last time it was introduced—not necessarily positive. The \$45 fee could be waived now. The new bill contains an amendment to allow the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive the \$45 filing fee for low-income tenants, although it doesn't really describe what low-income tenants are. It sounds good, but the concern is that it's already a busy process, and it may end up making it busier. You may have nuisance complaints, so that would tie up the Landlord and Tenant Board so that those who have legitimate concerns won't be able to get before it. That is the concern with that particular amendment.

My riding is Parry Sound–Muskoka, and perhaps our visitors can tell me if there are any co-ops in my riding. There is, in fact; I know of at least one, and that is in Gravenhurst. Bethune Housing Co-operative in Gravenhurst has 31 units. They are wheelchair-accessible. That's the one I'm aware of. I'll wait for our neighbours to send me a note with any others that they know of in my riding, but that's the one that I'm aware of in my riding.

I will say, though, that there's certainly a great need, especially for affordable housing, in Parry Sound–Muskoka. We do have a lot of various types of non-profit housing. We have the Parry Sound local housing corporation, the Parry Sound District Housing Corp.; they have some 209 units that are rent-geared-income units. Of course, there are seven First Nations in Parry Sound–Muskoka as well, so there's a couple of federal not-for-profit organizations: the Georgian Bay Native Non-Profit, and Fell Homes, which is in Burk's Falls, is also providing accommodation.

On the Muskoka side of the riding, certainly, the Muskoka District Community Services provides a lot of housing.

But I should get on the record that Graydon Smith, the mayor of Bracebridge, wouldn't be happy with me having the opportunity to speak if I didn't bring up one of his biggest issues, and that is that for the economic development programs that can help an area grow and have jobs and have income so you can afford housing, Muskoka seems to be in a big black hole. That is, the government has created these new economic develop-

ment regions; they have one covering most of Ontario. Of course, Muskoka used to be in the north, then the current government in 2003 decided that it would no longer be in the north for provincial programs. All of a sudden, Muskoka no longer had access to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. Since then, the government has created a southwest development corporation, and they've created an eastern development corporation. For some reason, as I say, Muskoka is in this black hole.

If it's fair for everybody else, I would simply say it's not fair for Muskoka to be in this black hole, because if you look at statistics like average income, for example—people think of Muskoka as being million-dollar cottages and the home of wealthy folks who come up to the lake, but the reality is that for year-round residents, average incomes are actually significantly below the provincial average. In fact, when you compare it to the eleven northern ridings, we're the 10th-lowest annual average income.

As I say, Graydon Smith, the mayor of Bracebridge, would want me to make that point, because that's probably the biggest issue. Every time I see him, he brings up that he doesn't think it's fair. I would agree with him that it's not fair that Muskoka is in this black hole.

I should mention that I've had people come to me about this emergency shelter fund, money that the district of Muskoka, through its programs, gives for people that are about to be evicted. I had some of the agencies come to me and say that the government played with the numbers a little bit and has essentially reduced the funding for the emergency shelter fund while claiming they've put it in other places, but that is causing some problems in my area.

1710

We have a very strong Habitat for Humanity on the Muskoka side that's been doing a lot of builds around Bracebridge, Huntsville and Gravenhurst. They've recently opened a new ReStore in Huntsville; there's also one in Bracebridge and there's a brand new Parry Sound wing of Habitat for Humanity that's just getting going. I'm very pleased that that's happening because they do a great job of creating new and affordable housing; as well, a great organization, and I try to get out to their events whenever possible.

I just recently travelled with the finance committee up to Thunder Bay, and there a number of the presenters made a point of talking about the need for affordable housing, certainly, and the need for shelter beds as well in that part of the world, which is quite a unique part of the world with just a huge geographic area, huge challenges, a very large First Nations population, aboriginal population, as well.

I'd also like to get on the record that we have some other new projects going on in the riding, including a brand new initiative in Parry Sound–Muskoka to create a men's residence, because right now there's no men's residence or men's shelter. There's a new project called Blue Skies Men's Residence that is being headed up by Heather LeClerc, and I know George Sopher on the Parry Sound side of the riding has been a strong advocate in

trying to create a men's residence. It would be geared to income. They're just at the stage of trying to raise money for that. In fact, I think they have raised some money towards it and are hoping to get it built in late 2013-14.

We've had some other very successful projects, most recently in Huntsville. Chrysalis, a shelter for women, was opened with tremendous support. We also have Esprit Place in Parry Sound, which started up in 1986. I was actually there for their 25th anniversary. Chrysalis, as I say, is in Huntsville. Muskoka Interval House and those organizations are managed by Joy McCormack, at Muskoka Women's Advocacy Group.

There's a lot going on but also a tremendous need, and certainly I see co-ops as being part of the mix. We look forward to having more than just one in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. I'm sure that they fill a need and can do a great job in providing housing.

I see I'm pretty much out of time, Mr. Speaker, but I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill and hope that this time it finishes off the full process and, of course, goes to committee and gets some recommendations from the public and then gets back here for third reading and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to be here commenting on the remarks of my colleague. I want to note the presence of Dale Reagan, Harvey Cooper, Simone Swail and, a bit earlier, Judith Collins, a constituent of mine, all here in a very long-term task, a task showing great resilience and tenacity to try to get this legislation forward.

Speaker, as you're well aware, this legislation will allow housing co-operatives to avail themselves of lower-cost tribunals and processes to deal with evictions, something that, frankly, is to the advantage of housing co-ops because it allows them to contain their costs, and to the advantage of the province because we want affordable housing to be successful.

It's been very clear, listening to members of the government, members of the opposition and my colleagues, that we are all prepared to go to committee on this. We are all ready to hear those presentations and hear those submissions and make whatever amendments are necessary. I'm sure there will be amendments—that's just the way bills and legislation are—so that this can be put in place.

As you're well aware, Speaker, we had a chance to debate this bill very thoroughly before the government was shut down, before the Legislature was shut down by Dalton McGuinty. We have now gone through a second round of thorough debate. I'd ask every party in this chamber to support taking this through to committee. I think we've said what we need to say. Now we need to go forward and actually have a decision. I urge all parties to support a vote on this and movement to committee as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I just want to applaud the words of the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. I know that area quite well, being a homeowner up there. Bracebridge is one of the most beautiful spots in all of Ontario, whether it's north or south or east or west. Whatever category it falls into, it is a gorgeous place, and I know the member knows that.

Resilience and tenacity would describe what the co-op movement is basically all about. When you see the kind of wonderful work that Habitat for Humanity and the ReStore centre are doing up in the honourable member's riding, you can only smile with admiration. I agree with the member, who observed that it's time to get this into committee so we can get going on it. I'll sit down if you promise to have a vote right away to do that. We'd be keen to see that happen.

The member opposite mentioned First Nations and the concept of affordable housing. I think one of the real joys of co-operative housing is that it has the potential, in fact, to be affordable housing. A lot of people who build homes don't build them to be necessarily affordable or even to the specific needs of the population that may, in fact, be housed. Add to that the fact that some levels of government have been known to abandon housing entirely; it would sure be nice to have a federal partner when it comes to this sort of thing or to not be down-loading housing and such.

I think there's great potential in the co-operative movement. I've been involved with the co-operative movement, housing in particular, for many years. I applaud the tenacity and the resilience of the group and look forward, like others, to getting this into committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's an honour to rise in response to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, and it was nice to hear about the beauty of the riding. I've had the opportunity to drive through it a number of times in my former work, and it is breathtaking, the highways through the mountains and the vast forests up there. It's a huge tourist area and a big part of Ontario. It's nice to get the chance to go through there, and often we don't get enough chances to go through areas of Ontario that are truly beautiful.

They talked about co-operative housing really being affordable housing, and I think that's a good point. I think that we're looking at trying to help out a lot of the needy people in this province. Co-operative housing is a great way of doing it because you have a landlord, which is the tenants themselves, that has an interest in keeping the property up. As I said, in talking with housing co-operatives in our area in Stormont, Dundas and South Glengarry, they're looking at ways of improving the system even more and talked about rents in the \$300 range. Really, in this day and age, to have one of the premium locations in the city of Cornwall—that rent level would be something very affordable for many people, to the point where people stay well into their senior years. They're looking for help so that they can

actually stay there when they can no longer look after themselves without some help.

There are lots of areas where this government can look forward to helping out people, and this is one, and they have all-party support. It's the fourth attempt to put this through, so let's see it go through. I think that it's something that has been needed. Possibly some changes will be done in committee, but I think we have all-party support to move ahead on this.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: As many people in this House have said this afternoon, this is a bill that, however small, is a step in the right direction. It's something that many of us agree we should just kind of get on with already, that we should bring it to committee. We can move this forward. It's an issue of fairness for people who are living in co-ops that they should be able to have affordable access to justice, because having something being affordable is really a matter of whether or not it is accessible.

When I spoke earlier, I said that in Kenora-Rainy River, we don't, to my knowledge, have any co-ops. I'm looking to the guests in the gallery, who would be, it seems to me, agreeing with me. I just wanted to double-check that.

The affordable housing that we have is managed by one of the DSSABs—the district social services administration boards. They have a real challenge in providing subsidized housing to people in all areas. I have over 70 communities in my riding. The community that has the largest population is Kenora. It has a population of about 16,000. So it's really difficult to redistribute, especially when you're talking about physical infrastructure.

There does need to be more done to help this particular DSSAB, the Kenora District Services Board, to be able to acquire and maintain the buildings, because these buildings—they inherited them in the late 1990s. They weren't necessarily in tip-top shape; they weren't brand new units. Some of the challenges that they have are, when people move out of areas, there's no longer a need in that area—for instance, in Minaki. So we need to make some of those changes. We need to provide them with the supports that they need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments, so I return to the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka for his two-minute response.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the members from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and Toronto-Danforth, the Minister of Community and Social Services and the member from Kenora-Rainy River for their comments.

I had wanted, in my speech, to get in some comments to do with the Landlord and Tenant Board, particularly from the landlord perspective and of small landlords, of which I have a lot in my riding. I seem to get a lot of landlords contacting me, very unhappy with nightmare

situations where it's bad tenants that have damaged the apartment and they can't evict them.

I was going to complete one letter as a good example of the many letters I've had, but I'll just read a little bit of it—the conclusion at the end of a long letter:

"There is a lot of media regarding the lack of housing in Muskoka. I would like to suggest that if Muskoka continues to be underserved with only one hearing per month and then a sheriff that can't be scheduled for 28 days after a request is made, why would your constituents want to risk renting to families with low income in Muskoka?"

"As an employee in human services, I have heard about these types of horror stories from landlords, so I know that I am not the only landlord that has experienced this hardship."

Mr. Speaker, the letter—that's just the conclusion of it, but it illustrates that all is not perfect with the Landlord and Tenant Board. As I say, I've had many, many, many constituents contact me about it and go through their very specific situation and how it doesn't seem to work very efficiently. So I would simply say that I know this bill now uses this system for co-ops and that maybe it needs to be looked at and improved a little bit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to continue debate on Bill 14. The short title: the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act. I won't go into the long title; we've heard that several times this afternoon.

We're also looking at amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Co-operative Corporations Act. Much of it, very simply, would move co-op eviction applications and other disputes from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board. We have heard, Speaker, that, under the Co-operative Corporations Act, the co-ops must apply to the courts to resolve disputes, not the board. Again, as has been explained this afternoon, this can be time-consuming and can be more expensive than it should be, not only for co-op providers but for residents and everyone involved.

The proposed legislation—we've been debating this for some time now. Someone indicated this goes back to 2007. I really question why this has been dragged on so long.

Under the bill, co-ops would be able to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to resolve evictions and other things resulting from disputes. It seems to me this would be obviously much more efficient and would help reduce the financial burden on co-ops and members of co-ops. It also streamlines the internal dispute resolution process in non-profit co-ops to clarify that hearings before the board and also that rates are determined—nothing wrong with this—on the merits of the case.

I would add that, barring any other measures, the board is the most appropriate venue for these kinds of housing disputes. We know of the disputes: arrears in rent, late payment, willful damage, illegal activity by

tenants, tenants interfering with other tenants' enjoyment of their property. This all sounds very familiar to me. I was a landlord for 12 years. I've also been a tenant for many, many years.

Clearly, there's obviously a need, as we've heard during debate. There's something like 125,000 people in Ontario who live in non-profit housing co-ops. There's something like 550 co-ops in the province. I don't think any of them are in my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk. I'm not aware of having any dealings with co-ops, but I can appreciate that there is a need where they exist. I have a number of condo corporations. I know I've certainly dealt with condo organizations in the Dunnville and Simcoe areas having problems and concerns with the county in each case, not getting the municipal services they feel are warranted—garbage collection, for example—and, in lieu of that, requesting a reduction in their taxes. Again, this has been going on for a number of years, certainly in Dunnville.

I do hear from landlords in my constituency office with respect to bad tenants. Again, there's some unfairness there, in my view. Landlords are concerned that tenants can get legal help and landlords can't, for example—concerns that tenants are able to drag out hearings.

I know our housing critic, Mr. Clark, made reference to similar concerns. He made reference to a landlord named Ted. This is from Ted: "Not many have the time, the patience or the resources to litigate these matters. It is the opinion of this landlord that the system, which has seen benefits over the years, has to be simplified, the process more friendly.... One has no idea until they experience this bureaucracy from a person with no idea of where to start, the frustration of where to turn or what to do now. To go to the tribunal to be turned away because of an incorrect process, incorrect form served, to hear that the tenant has access to duty counsel, while the landlord has no support." That's the end of the quote from Ted.

Ted, like many landlords, is asking why government cannot look at some of these obvious problems that exist and come up with something a little more streamlined, something a little more fair, something a little simpler, something that works for both sides—and again, that's what the Landlord and Tenant Board was set up for in the first place. This legislation will help somewhat, but we do see a system that does get bogged down in procedural matters. It gets bogged down in bureaucratic delays that in many cases only perpetuate the original complaint.

1730

There's another issue I want to address in my role as critic of social services with respect to low-income housing. I do hear this a lot—I see this, door-knocking, actually—where so many low-income facilities, many of them, in my view, when they were established in our riding, were set up for seniors, for example. In many cases, drug dealers have moved in. We know this is obviously the case in this city. I don't think there's anybody here who doesn't know that bullets are flying in

Toronto. They're very serious concerns for seniors and a threat to their safety. All they ask for—and they are dependent somewhat on government assistance—is a safe, livable place to call home. I think that's a shame that some of that has regrettably gotten out of control.

Nuisance hearings, again, something that backlogs through the system: I don't know whether this legislation is going to address that or not. That's bad news not only for landlords, but those tenants themselves who have legitimate cases before the board that everybody wants to see resolved in a timely manner.

We know there are going to be further amendments which will go before committee. Again, it's too bad much of this has been delayed. This proposed bill should have been law a while ago. I mean, how many hundreds of thousands of dollars in unnecessary court costs have been racked up for that reason?

Something that comes to mind: This coming Wednesday is the funeral for Margaret Thatcher. One of her more significant initiatives—this goes back to the late 1970s. Thatcher introduced legislation to implement the right to buy with respect to council houses in Britain, and many of them did. So many became homeowners under Margaret Thatcher's Housing Act of 1980. The sale price of a council house was based on its market valuation, but also included a discount to reflect the rents paid by tenants to encourage them to take up. The Thatcher legislation gave council tenants the right to buy their council house at a discounted value, again depending on how long they'd been living in the house, with the proviso that if they did sell the house before a minimum period had expired, they would have to pay back a proportion of the discount.

These sales were a very attractive deal for tenants. Hundreds of thousands of homes were sold, and as I said, this policy was considered one of the major achievements of the Thatcher era. Proceeds of the sales were paid to local authorities. They used this to pay down their debt. As I recall, I think there was something like a million council houses sold under that program.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Bill Walker: We're going to get to that 10 minutes if we keep it up.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I will. I will get to 10 minutes eventually—although we really shouldn't have to do this, because when the member from Lanark—Frontenac mentioned that we're bogged down, that really is an understatement. When you are resurrecting the memory and the legacy of Margaret Thatcher on housing, we know that we should be officially done right here, right now. This vote needs to happen. We need to get this done, because that means that you have fully and completely and utterly run out of material, right? We have been in this House debating this and discussing this for hours and hours and hours. I mean, this is incredible. This needs to go to a vote.

We need to get this done because there are people waiting. For instance, the wait-list for social housing has

swelled to over 157,000 households. It's a 26% increase since 2007. Toronto's affordable housing wait-list, as of January 2013, was 87,000 households or over 160,000 women, men and children, an increase of 6% since January 2012. And these numbers are generally focused on the GTA.

My colleague from Kenora—Rainy River raises the issue of First Nations housing, and my colleague from Welland has raised the issues of shelters and women who actually need secure, stable housing, and yet, hours and hours discussing this.

This needs to move forward. That's all I got to say on it. That's all I'm going to say on it until it comes to third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, if I could just do a short aside. I just found out about the bombings at the Boston Marathon. I had some very good friends, as part of the running community in Thunder Bay, who were qualified and were attending there today. I'm just hoping that somebody will hear this and give me a call and let me know that at least one very close friend is fine and safe and on his way home.

Speaker, on this particular issue, I've spoken a number of times on this particular bill. I haven't spoken a lot about the federal government involved in the housing that we're able to provide in the province of Ontario. I do want to give a nod. Even though it is diminished funding, I understand that the federal budget did contain funding for housing in the province of Ontario. I know it has been a declining amount over the last number of years, but there were a number of us who were concerned that it might be one of those line items in the federal budget that, perhaps, disappeared altogether. There's been some examples of this in the past. I think we all remember the child care money about four or five years ago, \$63 million that we found about a week before the budget and have funded for the last four or five years. We've managed to fill the void. I'm thankful that at the federal level there's been at least some money coming. Other members have talked about \$3 billion since 2003 not being enough. Hopefully this will enable us to continue to do a bit of good work.

Also, I should mention that the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka, in his remarks, talked about shelter beds in Thunder Bay. He visited Thunder Bay a short time ago. I'm happy to let the member know that not long ago, my colleague Michael Gravelle and I were proud to be part of an announcement where there will be 22 expanded mental health and addiction beds in the city of Thunder Bay, as well as other initiatives in that regard. I just thought, seeing as he raised it, I'd have an opportunity to mention that as well.

At the end of the day, as I've mentioned previously, it's an access-to-justice issue. We feel very strongly about this. We're not sure why it hasn't happened quite some time ago but we're very pleased to see it moving forward. By the sounds of things it has the support of

other two parties in the Legislature and we're thankful for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to have my colleague from Norfolk speak. He takes this very seriously. He's been involved in social services for many years. He's a very caring individual who is always bringing to our caucus table the need to ensure that those needy have the rightful services that they so do need.

And, you know, when he brings up Margaret Thatcher, I think what he's bringing up is someone who actually stood up and made very difficult decisions, but for the betterment of her country and all of the people that the UK deals with. At the end of the day, many leaders stood up and acknowledged what a profound impact she had. I think it's a credit to my colleague that he would actually give her credit for that, because it's easy to make the easy decisions. It's not easy to make those decisions that sometimes are more difficult. It pains me at times to hear some of the other members of the other parties that discredit him and people like Margaret Thatcher who gave of their whole life to be able to support the people who are needy. If they hadn't made strong decisions at that time, there would have been a lot more homelessness, a lot more people that wouldn't have had any of the services that they've come to depend upon.

Right now, this debate we're having here, the money that we've wasted in these debates and waiting for these debates to continue: think about the people who could have had more housing had it been implemented back in 2004 when it started. Think of how many people could be housed if we were to have the \$85 million that the Liberals have wasted on the Mississauga gas plant and the purported billion dollars that are going to be wasted on the Oakville gas plant. Think about the billion-dollar boondoggle that has already happened and what we could have done with that money. So this affordable housing, co-op housing—we could have had a lot more if we had had that.

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We need to always be looking that we're here to serve those people—all the people of Ontario but particularly those less fortunate. We care. We do hold out hope that the government and the third party will support initiatives that are going to help those less fortunate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment, and I look to the member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I've heard extensively from the opposition on this matter. I do have to note that when they came to power as a government in the mid-1990s, they acted quickly and sharply to make sure no more housing was built for people of lower incomes, without a doubt.

But I say to them today that they could actually, with the time available, take a good step forward and allow us to conclude this debate on this bill, which they've said on

numerous occasions, can actually be wrapped up. They feel it is one they can support; it could go to committee. There's no need to talk this one out, Mr. Speaker. There's no need to spend more hours of time in this chamber on this debate. The government has made it very clear they support the bill; they brought it forward. Numerous speeches made by members of the opposition—it's very clear they support the bill. It's very clear from our seats there's no problem with going forward.

What's needed is a recognition that second reading has been well and truly done. This one's cooked. It is well cooked. Now, having gone through that process of heating and singeing, it is ready to be served at committee, where people can actually get a chance to speak from the public, put forward their positions, be heard, where all parties can bring forward any amendments that they feel are necessary and allow this government, this chamber, and the people in co-op housing to get on with business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do appreciate the feedback from, certainly, members from the third party. We do have to think beyond this bill. We all recognize that it is somewhat limited in scope. The need exists for clean, affordable housing, and I do ask members present to look at options. Look at that private sector rental market, private sector ownership. It should not be discounted. I'd like to think, and we should look into this, that the rent-to-own program for many subsidized housing tenants would be worth looking at.

My constit office is in the town of Simcoe. The second floor of these shops in downtown Simcoe is vacant. It's not doing well. So many people that come into our office are living up there, and there has to be perhaps another look at tax incentives for the owners, the landlords, that have those buildings to make better use of that vacant stock. Whether we explore right to buy—it obviously has worked in other jurisdictions at discounted prices now.

Margaret Thatcher I don't think ever lived in subsidized housing. She did live above the store; she was a shopkeeper's daughter. Jack Layton lived in subsidized housing, as I recall. But again with a—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: May I say, Speaker, that is a load of crap. And you, member, should know what really went on, and you should withdraw those remarks. That was fixed-income housing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I ask the members to come to order. Take a seat; please take your seat.

I have to ask the member for Toronto–Danforth, first, to withdraw his inflammatory remark.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I will ask the member for Haldimand–Norfolk to withdraw.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

I now wish to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Ms. Wong assumes ballot item number 23 and Ms. Damerla assumes ballot item number 29.

Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's an honour to get up and speak on this bill. I've heard many comments that it's time to move on, but we also have a responsibility as members of the House to speak on the bills and to propose amendments and changes that we think are important or to discuss the importance of a particular bill.

In this case here, it was a promise from the 2003 election by this government, so we're happy to see them finally getting to a point where we think that, possibly, they will move ahead with this bill. It's the fourth time they've brought it up and for many reasons that I wasn't a part of—except for the last one, when the House was prorogued—there was always some reason that it was not called for royal assent. I guess we're expecting now that that may change and we'll see something different.

It was interesting to hear the comments of a few minutes ago, because we have a lot of powers here, but one thing that we can't do is change history. I think that was what was said by the member that talked about some of the history that has gone on and some of the people that have benefited from social housing.

Our social housing coalition came in from our city of Cornwall, and they talked about the benefits and their wish to see this program extended where they actually could get more social housing units. They had 100 units in their complex and a waiting list of 90 people looking to get into these social housing units. The main reason behind it is because it was so affordable. They were looking at rents in the \$300 range, and I think that this should be seen as an opportunity by this House to look at ways of making housing more affordable. This not-for-profit housing is maybe something that we should be looking for.

They were looking for some help; it was actually so attractive that their tenants were long-term tenants, there from the beginning, looking at making some changes that would allow them to stay into their senior years, and wondering about the availability of grants that would allow them to put handicapped washrooms in and the like—whether they could benefit from this program where they would receive 15% back on the unit. Of course, we looked into that, but Doyle Campbell from that group was a great volunteer, and I guess the housing units generally are there because of the work by the volunteer group.

We know that although this sector was at one time about 20% to 25% of the new units in this province, it now is down around 4%. It's something we should look at, to try to bring it up and try to bring up some of the housing numbers, because I believe that this is just a

result of some of the failed policies we've seen with this government, where they've driven up housing costs by driving up energy costs. We saw the Auditor General talk about some of the costs of the Mississauga plant today, costs that will have to be passed on to the ratepayers and, in the end, end up driving up the cost of housing, whether it be construction or actually living.

It's interesting to know that a government that professes to be so much in the know could be so far wrong with the costs of those cancellations. I guess we sit now waiting for the costs of the Oakville plant, wondering if the experts that we've heard that put the costs up over \$800 million—we'll see who's right. This government, I think, is talking—around \$40 million was the cost. You can imagine how that drives up the cost of business and makes housing unaffordable. It makes seniors in my riding talk about making some tough choices: whether they can afford to pay for hydro or pay for food. I think that it's time that this government start looking at some of the issues that are really affecting the people of this province.

We're looking at 600,000—or, I guess, 650,000 people now, after 58,000 more jobs were lost last month—looking for employment in this province. It's higher than the national average for the last 75 months. You hear that stat, a stat from Stats Canada—and I haven't heard anybody argue that it's wrong—but I keep hearing numbers that this government has done better than any other jurisdiction in North America—

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Mr. Bill Walker: Overachieving. It's definitely overachieving.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: —overachieving—but I guess we aren't seeing the results. I don't know where the numbers—I guess you can believe the government here or you can believe Stats Canada. I know where I'm believing, because I hear people in my riding running into issues, and I know we're not as badly off as many other ridings in this province.

It's time that we started working for the people. We've heard many issues, promises being made. This is one promise that, after 10 years, looks like it's going to be held. Co-operative housing has a real purpose in this province.

There are some amendments. We see an amendment here that was brought forth, that may make life not so easy for the boards. These boards are made up by the tenants themselves, the co-operatives. We want to make sure that we move the dispute mechanism over to the rental tribunal, but that we make it so that it's actually workable. We hear of long wait times now, and if we add enough complaints to the current board, then we just extend the limits by months and years. We're not really helping out the people that need help; we're just making it much harder.

This government—we have to look at making some tough choices. We haven't seen that. We see people in this province that are looking for work. We see high energy costs, high property taxes. We talk about

promises. I've heard of people that have been waiting for hospitals since 2003. The word in the last election was, "Vote for us or you won't get your hospital." But I think people are starting to wonder just—the credibility of this government. There are promises made three or four times, and they're still not seeing them followed. I guess it tends to be maybe a trait, after you see things go through time and time again.

We see the Green Energy Act and the Auditor General's report, talking about decisions made there, where a business case had not been done to look at the effect of such a failed program on the number of jobs lost.

The cost of electricity: We see companies leaving this province, looking for lower costs, like Xstrata out of Timmins, where they moved 500 or 600 jobs to Quebec, just because it's cheaper to do business there. This last year alone, we've seen three or four large companies leaving this province.

I think the people of Ontario are starting to demand, at least in my riding, changes—changes to a government that will look out for the people and not itself. Certainly, that was reinforced last October, the day after Thanksgiving, when we came back and we were all surprised by not only the prorogation but also the resignation by the Premier at that time. We see a new Premier in this office who talks about following in the same—I guess what they call "proud history." I've got people in my riding that may call that something different. They see it as a government that's clinging to power and willing to make any promise or make any decision at any cost.

Likely, you know, we're still waiting to hear the June report from the Auditor General. Probably that decision alone will cost \$1 billion, and that's not talking about the \$200 million we spend every year trying to get rid of excess power. It's just a failed program that needs to be looked at.

So we look at an act here, or legislation, which was previously brought up and died in the House when it was prorogued last October. I think everybody's talking about the need to put this through. I hope to hear from some of the other members of the party and see what their opinions of it are. So far, I haven't heard any negative comments on it, so I'm thinking it will move to committee, where we'll be able to look at some of the issues and make sure that it's really going to serve the purpose that it needs to.

In the end, I think we're looking for more reasons for people to build co-operative housing. It's a great solution to look after a lot of people who are needy in this province. But to do that, we've got to get rid of some of the red tape that stops groups from moving ahead on this. We want to make sure that the governance of them is encouraging. People in this province will start building again and, through that, creating jobs. Projects such as the College of Trades, which contractors in my riding say are killing jobs—the union members I talk to are upset with it because they just see it as another tax. It's time to stop the tax.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: You know, the longer we discuss this bill, the more I struggle to come up with something to contribute. I think that's really because up until we first debated this bill in the last session, I didn't know what co-op housing was—never even heard of it. As I said earlier, in Kenora–Rainy River we don't have any co-op housing, so it isn't really that much of a surprise that I'd never really heard about it.

As I mentioned earlier, though, and I mentioned at length, in Kenora–Rainy River we do have another set of issues related to affordable housing. This government and this Premier claim to know and care about the challenges that we face in northwestern Ontario, but I challenge this government to do something about the biggest issue related to affordability of housing in the north, and that is to bring down our electricity rates. As I said, this government claims to understand the issues and challenges that we face. I'd like to see those words put into action.

It's a little frustrating to talk about a bill that's supposedly supposed to affect all of Ontario and to have northwestern Ontario, yet again, not affected by this. I'd like to see what this province, what the government is going to do to make things a little bit fairer, to recognize that the environment that we live in is fundamentally different than the environment that exists in southern Ontario.

I see a lot of glazed-over faces on the other side, on the government side, but really, it is something that we can do. This isn't the first time that we've heard about high electricity prices, certainly not from me. You've heard it for years from my predecessor. You hear it from people across the north. What is this government going to do to make life more affordable for people living in the north?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, one of my neighbours, I think—one of our boundaries.

I'd just like to say, we talk about jobs and we see some ads from the federal government that they're very proud that since the 2008 recession Canada has recovered—I think it's 750,000 jobs, something like that. They're bragging about it. If you look at the details, Ontario has had about half of those jobs—almost half of those jobs. So Ontario is punching above its weight when it comes to new jobs after the terrible recession. I just wanted to mention that. You should be bragging about our job record the same as Harper is bragging about his.

I just have some facts, and they've probably been repeated in this House a long time. I think I should speak like the member for Toronto—is it Toronto–Danforth? Yes. It's time we get over talking about this bill and get it done so these people can go out and do their work.

One of the big advantages, of course, is that the average cost of an eviction—it lasts only six months—is \$3,000 to \$5,000. The cost of those evictions is one of the big parts we're dealing with in this bill. When some-

body is not a proper member of the co-op, it certainly gets a lot of those things.

There are 44,000 households representing 125,000 people in co-op housing. I remember going with Jim Watson, when he was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and looking at the options for housing. This is one of the big ones then.

Let's get over all this talking. Let's send it to committee. Let's get this bill passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's an absolute pleasure to be able to speak to this bill today, Speaker.

My colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is bang on as always. He started his talk off with how this is an election promise that goes back to 2003 with the Liberals and they still haven't fulfilled it. I don't even want to go down the list of the others that they have—you know, eHealth: "We will not raise your health taxes." Speaker, I don't want to go there. I want to talk about what he was talking about in the second part. He talked about the wait times that are continually there for co-op housing and the people who are in those wait times who continually hurt and are not afforded the luxury of having that co-op housing because of this.

He talked about the high energy costs. He talked about high property taxes. Just today, the Auditor General brought out a study that shows that the Liberals once again spent \$85 million more than what they said they would. We shouldn't have trusted them all the way along, but that's \$85 million that could have gone to those people in co-op housing.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Is that 40%?

Mr. Bill Walker: That is over 40%. They could have had more houses built, and people could have had the opportunity to be in one of those houses.

My colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk talked about Margaret Thatcher and tough decisions. She made those tough decisions in a time and a period to ensure that those less fortunate would actually have more. Today, in this province, the third-largest amount we spend in our budget is to service the debt that that government has run up. They've doubled the debt in eight years. Just think if all that money to service that debt had been going into co-op housing, into people who want more, who need more, who deserve more.

It's shameful that they continue to spend at the rate they do. It's shameful that this bill has been brought back three times and has still not been enacted to help those people who they purport to care about. It's unbelievable that we do this. We had prorogation thrown in there and wasted four months.

What we really need to do is come together. Let's get this bill passed with some amendments to help those less fortunate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

I'll return to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to thank the members from Kenora–Rainy River, Ottawa–Orléans and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their comments.

The member from Kenora–Rainy River talked about not having co-operative housing in her riding, and that's unfortunate, because it is a great alternative and something that I think has worked out in many areas. She talked about her priority, which I think is the priority of everybody on this side: trying to bring down the electrical rates. But that's going to be tough to do. We're seeing 20-year contracts put out for power projects that we don't need, paid at higher rates than should be paid. We borrowed billions of dollars to pay for these projects, and as I say, we don't need them.

Then there's the green energy benefit—borrowing more money. Little reason that MacLean's magazine, in their—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I am compelled to ask the member to tell me how this relates back to Bill 14.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm making comments to our member from Kenora–Rainy River, talking about electrical rates. MacLean's magazine talked about “most likely to default” on our debts in Ontario.

I look forward to moving ahead to the committee on this bill. I think there are some needed changes on it. It is a place where we can possibly encourage more housing units and save some money, something that I don't think we've seen on the other side there. We've seen an urgency to waste money, and this is a place where we're not wasting money. So I think it's time to move ahead.

Interjections.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's interesting to hear the comments here, because I think it's time to move ahead and look after the people of Ontario and not themselves.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1804.

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No. 25

N° 25

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**Second Session, 40th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Deuxième session, 40^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Tuesday 16 April 2013****Mardi 16 avril 2013**Speaker
Honourable Dave LevacPrésident
L'honorable Dave LevacClerk
Deborah DellerGreffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 April 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 avril 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 10, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of permit denials and out-of-province service and evidence in certain proceedings and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / *Projet de loi 34, Loi visant à modifier le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les refus relatifs aux certificats d'immatriculation et la signification et les preuves extraprovinciales dans certaines instances, et à apporter une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I look forward to the next 59 minutes and 58 seconds to discuss this riveting bill before us. With your permission, I will on occasion drift somewhat, but not far, because I realize that we're committed to speaking to the issue at hand.

I'm concerned that we're opening the business of this House today in the wake of yet another special report by the Auditor General that confirms what opposition parties have been saying for a number of months now, and that is that the decision by the Liberal Party of Ontario to cancel the Mississauga gas-fired power plant to save the seat of the now Minister of Finance in the 2011 election cost the taxpayers of this province at least \$351 million. Assuming that these costs can be offset by an estimated \$76 million, the auditor confirmed that the cost to the taxpayers will be at least \$275 million.

Speaker, here's what the Auditor General said in his press release yesterday: "In 2005, the government contracted with the builder, Greenfield South Power Corp., for a 280-MW natural-gas-fired"—

Hon. John Milloy: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I think we all recognize the fact that, particularly during an hour-long speech, members may do a bit of

a tour of the horizon, but he has begun his speech on the Highway Traffic Act speaking about the Auditor General's report. I believe the standing orders would say he should be speaking to the Highway Traffic Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I will listen carefully. I know that the member has already mentioned the breadth of his discussion, and I'm listening carefully.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, you will recognize the segue that I will take, and there is a reason, because the context within which the Minister of Transportation is bringing his bill forward, which is all about collecting unpaid fines from, as the minister referred to them in his speech, lawbreakers in this province—it's important that we have a good sense of what the fiscal framework is of this province.

With your permission, I'd like to just finish what I was reading—again, I hope uninterrupted this time by the government House leader.

I quote from the Auditor General: "In 2005, the government contracted with the builder, Greenfield South Power Corp., for a 280-MW natural-gas-fired electricity generating plant in Mississauga. After various and extensive delays, construction of the Mississauga plant began in June 2011. Shortly before the October 6, 2011, general election, the Liberal Party announced it was cancelling the already started construction of the plant. Shortly after the election, the re-elected minority government directed the OPA to negotiate the cancellation with Greenfield."

Speaker, we have before us a bill that the Minister of Transportation brought forward, and rightfully so. I'll say at the outset that the PC caucus will be supporting passage of this bill. We believe wholeheartedly that those who break the law and are convicted and are issued fines should pay those fines. Whether those convicted are residents of this province or whether they're visitors to this province, we also believe that the mechanism should be there to ensure that those fines are paid, especially given the fact that most of those fines that are captured in this bill are owed to municipalities across this province. When we know that at this point in time there are close to \$1 billion of unpaid fines that are owed to those municipalities, it just simply makes good sense that we in this Legislature would accommodate an effective collection of those unpaid fines.

So the principle, we agree with. We will, however, make some recommendations. I'm going to have, over the course of this debate, some questions for the Minister of Transportation, because I believe that, new to his portfolio, there may well be some issues within his ministry

of which he is not yet aware, and those of us who have had some experience in this House would like to appeal to the minister to take whatever time he needs to thoroughly investigate what I'm about to bring to his attention.

All of these changes that the minister has referred to in terms of collection of fines, in terms of working with the court system to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place—the minister referred to the fact that, through regulation, he will be making retroactive the capacity of collecting on these fines; I believe he said seven years is how far back he will go. So we have circumstances where individuals who failed to pay their fine would be getting a notice in the mail, I'm assuming.

The question we have here is a very important one. This is the first question I have for the minister: Is the minister aware of the problems that he has within his ministry, within the ability of the minister to assure us that the information they have in their files is accurate, is up to date, and that the addresses they have for those individuals who may well be caught and be identified as not having paid fines—that that information is in fact accurate?

I'm going to give the minister some examples of why I have a concern. I'm going to ask the minister to bear with me on this, because I always find that there is nothing quite as effective as examples that are very practical.

0910

The first one that I want to draw to the minister's attention—and by the way, I want to just make a point with the minister. There is an individual in your ministry who deserves a great deal of credit. Her name is Elena Tersigni. This is someone within the ministry who I got to know when I was the minister there and who I believe is one of the most conscientious civil servants in the government of Ontario. She will go out of her way to accommodate requests. Minister, I'm going to ask you to do this: Do a review of her branch, do a review of her area of responsibility—and my advice would be that you have a third party do that review, with a view to determining what the resources are in that branch of your ministry to do the job that needs to be done. I'm convinced that while there are hard-working individuals within that branch, they are far from supported with the appropriate resources to get the job done. That's why many of us in this place—and I would be surprised if the minister himself has not had this kind of feedback from his constituents, in terms of the delays that our constituents experience. Those delays translate into significant hardships in the lives of constituents, in the lives of Ontarians, right across this province.

I'll start off with the first example. In this particular case—I'm going to read from a letter that my constituent sent me: "I left for Myrtle Beach (by car) on February 19 returning on March 5, 2011. Upon my return I opened the mail to find a letter from the ministry suspending my driver's licence on February 22 for an unpaid traffic fine which I discovered was dated some nine and a half years previously. I can recall the specific incident and the spe-

cific payment as these don't happen that often with me. The court office stated that without proof of payment there was nothing they would do about negating the issue. I note that a copy of the ticket is stamped 'Licence suspension—January 4, 2011.'

"I don't keep bank or other records for nine and a half years nor do I suspect do either yourself nor anyone else.

"The office claimed that they mailed me a 'heads-up' but (a) I suspect that they really didn't ... or (b) it would have been sent to an address that I vacated some many years ago and would have been undelivered. In any event they could have easily determined the proper address with a call to yourselves," that is, to the ministry.

I will not read the balance of the letter, but I will provide a copy of it to the minister. Here is the issue: an example, minister, of a letter that was sent to someone on an incident nine and a half years in the past. These letters are not being sent out by registered mail. I don't know what the minister has in mind, Speaker, in terms of notification to these individuals who have outstanding penalties or outstanding fines from up to seven years ago. As was noted by my constituent—I think I keep fairly good records. But if it comes to a matter of debating or challenging the Ministry of Transportation about whether I paid it or challenging the court as to whether I paid it, do I have a copy of that cheque? Maybe. Do I have a copy of a receipt? Maybe. But here's the point: This constituent received a letter—not a registered letter, so there was no guarantee that that individual would have received the suspension notification. He's on holiday; he's driving in Myrtle Beach. He got a notice not advising him that his licence would be suspended 30 days from now; his licence is suspended. Speaker, what are the implications of that?

Well, one implication is that had that individual had an accident, a collision that resulted in property damage, resulted in the loss of life, the first thing that would have happened is that his insurance would have been invalid because he's driving without a valid driver's licence. The implication to that individual in his personal life—his finances, his entire family—could have been catastrophic.

I've said this a number of times: I believe when we're dealing with something as important as someone's driver's licence, surely the ministry has a responsibility to ensure that if you're notifying someone that their licence has been suspended, we go the extra mile and we do that by registered mail. There has to be some way that we can confirm that that individual who is being advised of a suspension actually received that notice. So I would leave that with the minister and ask him to look into that, and I would appreciate a response from the minister on that request.

Speaker, I have another issue. This is one that causes considerable concern. I don't know about other members, but the number of complaints that I get—it's not really a complaint. It really is an appeal from constituents about how vision tests are handled by the Ministry of Transportation.

I'm going to take the time to read this letter into the record. The reason is because I think it will give the minister an opportunity to look very carefully at how these matters are handled. This is from my constituent Pat Morris. I'm using her name because I have authorization to do that. I'm going to quote from her April 20, 2012, letter. It goes as follows:

"Let me begin with that both Richard"—Richard being her husband—"and myself completely understand that driving is considered a privilege and not a right, and respect that.

"As part of the vision waiver, a letter is sent from the Ministry of Transportation every year advising Richard that his vision waiver report is due. This form letter states....

"The report must include monocular Humphrey full field 12-point screening test with fixation losses not exceeding 20% or Goldman 60-degree perimetry charts using a 1114e test size object with monitored reliability, and an Esterman binocular functional test with false positive/negative errors not to exceed"—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me just for a moment. I'd just ask if you would take the conversation outside. It's difficult to hear the speaker. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you. Speaker, I can't believe that my own colleagues aren't—I thought that my colleagues would be spellbound by my remarks this morning. Speaker, this is on their behalf and their constituents' behalf as well. I would ask that the next member who is so disrespectful—that you would ask them to leave. Just throw them right out of this place.

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you.

I'll continue where I left off: "and an Esterman binocular functional test with false positive/negative errors not to exceed 20% or a Goldman binocular field test using 1114e test object with the test's reliability confirmed. This reports must be returned to this office by" a certain "date determined by the ministry or driver's licence will be suspended."

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Here's the rest of the story: "[O]n more than one occasion, I have attempted to contact the Ministry of Transportation, with no success." Speaker, these are seniors. They receive a letter that is very complex. They have legitimate questions. They want to comply. They try to contact the ministry, and they can't. "The most recent attempt was on April 17, 2012, at which time I was on hold for 57 minutes before hanging up. What the recording stated is, 'We are experiencing a high volume of calls; the estimated wait time is 30 minutes.'"

These are people who are dealing—they're not ordering a pizza here; they're dealing with important matters that affect their day-to-day life. If the ministry can't get this part of it right, my concern is that there's a lot of other concern that we have in terms of the Ministry of

Transportation being able to administer the bill that's before us. Thirty minutes—I ask the minister: Will you at least check into doing what Air Canada does? Not that I'm singing Air Canada's praises, because Lord knows they've got their own problems. But here's what they do get right: If there is a long time that people are being held on hold, what that system allows you to do is to key in your telephone number, and they will call you back, so you're assured that you can get on with whatever you're doing and at least someone is going to call you back. The frustration of people in this province with the Ministry of Transportation is that they do their utmost to comply and then we make it impossible. This is not something that is earth-shattering; it's not groundbreaking, Minister. These are systems that are in place, and I would ask the minister to please look into this.

I'm going to continue this, because the next part of what Ms. Morris shares with us is particularly concerning. "Another instance was when I submitted the required tests to the ministry well before the required date." They were trying to do their part. "You can imagine my husband's horror when he received a letter from the ministry advising that his licence was suspended. No reason provided. I remember this day very clearly, as it was on a Friday, and when I arrived home, Richard showed me the correspondence from the Ministry of Transportation. I called the number on the letter and, strangely enough, someone actually answered the phone. Shocking to me! Realizing that I could not talk to the ministry, I explained the reason behind the call, then put Richard on the phone, who questioned as to why his driver's licence was suspended. He was told at that time that the ministry had not received the requested paperwork.... I explained/confirmed to the ministry that in fact they did have the required paperwork as it had been sent" by "registered mail." You see? My constituents are a little more thorough than the ministry is; they sent their information in by registered mail. "The gentleman put us on hold and returned on the line within 15 minutes, confirming that in fact the ministry did have the paperwork, and further elaborated that no one had entered into the system that the vision waiver report had been received by the Ministry of Transportation. This gentleman then reviewed the test and reinstated Richard's licence immediately."

I say to the minister, we have a problem here. Once again, put yourself into the shoes of my constituent. Not only did they comply; they went the extra step, submitted the information in advance of the due date, sent it by registered mail, and he got a suspension letter in the mail. The minute you get that suspension letter—not a warning, not saying, by the way, "We're going to suspend your licence 10 days from now if you don't reply." No. It's a suspension notice. Your licence is suspended. That individual can't leave the house, can't take the car, whether it's to a doctor's office, whether it's to go shopping, whether it's to visit a spouse in the hospital, whatever the issue is. It's automatically suspended—unjustifiably so, I say to the minister.

There should be no room for error here. If we allow that there are going to be errors, then I say to the minister, at the very least, do what I'm recommending and ensure that these letters that go out are sent by registered mail. And is it not reasonable under these circumstances that we provide a period of time so that there can be some communication so that, whatever matter has not been complied with, the individual is given some time to do it?

I'm going to give the minister another example here. This is an email that I asked my staff to provide me as an example, and I'm going to read this. It's from my assistant in my constituency office, Jacqueline Flowers. She writes, "On January 2, 2013, a Newmarket resident called in to get assistance with her driver's licence reinstatement. It was reported in 2010 that she had a seizure and licence was suspended and reinstated shortly after sorting this out. In October 2012, she applied for a B licence and was told that it could not be granted until they get information supporting that she is okay." In other words, this goes back to the fact that this seizure was on one side of the file, but the fact that it had been resolved never got transferred to the other side of the file. "She said it was submitted. Now she's getting the run-around and she needs this for a job. Spoke to MTO and was advised that our constituent was already speaking to someone at MTO"—in other words, they acknowledged that there is dialogue going on—"and was advised that her file was sent to the medical review panel. A decision should be made within the next few days. Followed up on January 10 and her B licence was issued on January 7."

The issue here is that, once again, we have a problem with our transfer of information. Does the left hand know what the right hand is doing? Every time that we have this conflict, there's someone who's experiencing hardship. This licence was necessary for a job; it was delayed. And the consequences are not with the ministry. Look, they carry on. The consequences are with—whether it's a senior, whether it's a young person—whoever it is who needs that licence to get from point A to point B to get on with their life.

Speaker, I have a letter here from another constituent, Andrew Atkinson. I'm going to read this into the record. This is dated March 25, 2013:

"I recently received a letter from the Ministry of Transportation indicating that I must forfeit my driving licence immediately due to 'psychiatric condition.' This was shocking to me....While the identity of who reported me to MTO is protected, I suspect it was" Southlake hospital in Newmarket, where he had attended for an ER visit. He says, "They released me that night with no prescriptions or follow-up appointments."

"I did turn in my licence right away when I read the notice. It appears that being conscientious about this matter just means I lose my ability to drive that much earlier. It is not suspended for a particular number of days, so handing in sooner increases the total time without a licence." The constituent did the right thing. He got the notice of suspension; he handed in his licence.

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He goes on to say:

"Taking the bus to the city takes at least twice as long. As such, I could not respond to job offers I had applied to, not expecting to suddenly lose my licence."

"I am considering dropping out of university too. I'm a top-performing student in terms of grade point average."

The bottom line is this with regard to this letter, I say to the minister: We have a serious problem with our reporting mechanism—that medical doctors are required to report to the MTO. Look, we all fully support and we pass legislation here that requires an that if attending physician, or anyone attending to a patient in this province, suspects that there may be a problem with that person being able to properly drive, there has to be a report to the MTO. But here's the problem: Many times, that attending physician says not a word to the patient. The patient has no idea that this correspondence is now taking place between the attending physician and the MTO. There is no opportunity for that individual, for that driver, to take whatever steps may be necessary to alleviate the suspicion of that attending physician. Keep in mind, this is not a confirmation on the part of the attending physician; this is merely a suspicion, a sense, having has some reason to believe there may be a problem. So what was intended to be a warning or an alert or a caution now becomes a sentence for that individual. They get a notice of suspension, they can't drive, and they don't even know the reason.

Now the process begins, and that process is something else that I'm going to ask the minister to please look into. In fact, I really think that whether it's the Auditor General or whether it is the Ombudsman, I believe that we need a thorough review of how our medical review system in this province works, because now it is the onus of responsibility of the constituent, of the resident, to seek out all of the follow-up reports or the medical examinations or the specialist reports that are now required by the ministry.

The rest of the story is this: The minister should know that, first of all, it can take weeks, if not months, to get an appointment with that specialist. All that time the person can't drive, can't go to work, can't perform any of his or her normal duties. Once that medical report is with the ministry, the policy—this isn't even left to chance—they are immediately told that it will take between six to eight weeks to get a response from the ministry. How can that be?

The minister is new in his job. This is not the first time that this has been brought to the attention of a Minister of Transportation. I'm asking the minister to take a fresh look on this.

I can tell you that from previous research that I've done, the solution is very simple. You see, one of the reasons that it takes six to eight weeks is that when those reports come in they're put into a stack—and by the way, the medical officers who now review those reports, most of them are part-time. They get to them when they get to

them. I'm not saying that they're not working hard. I'm not saying that the staff in this department isn't working hard. In fact, I have to tell you, I compliment the staff who are there, because when we make those follow-up calls, they are very responsive. But we feel guilty for making those calls, because the last thing we want to do, as members, is to ask someone to go into a stack of files and pull someone out and have someone dealt with in any special way simply because the MPP calls. That's not right.

It's a matter of a lack of resources, I say to the minister. I believe that something as important as an individual's ability to drive is not something that we should be shortchanging. I realize we have to be looking for efficiencies in all aspects of government, but this is not one of those areas—yes, efficiencies, but not cut-backs; yes efficiencies, but make sure that we have the appropriate resources available to the staff who are charged with the responsibility of carrying out that work.

The other concern that I have about this vision testing is that apparently, with regard to one of those procedures, there are only seven locations in the entire province that have the particular technology, the equipment, that's required for one of those vision tests. I have to believe—I've been told by ophthalmologists that that is an outdated approach to these tests, that there is equipment available right across the province that can deliver the same results and the same tests that many ophthalmologists have in their own offices. So I ask, why are we limiting it to these seven locations? My constituent in Aurora has to drive to Barrie to have that test. I ask the minister, does that make sense? Are you telling me that we should be directing people to drive miles and miles to get a test that they can get in their own hometown? I'll look forward to hearing from the minister on this.

I'd like to shift the discussion, if I could, to another area of the ministry, and it's consistent with the discussion that we're having here. It again relates to the minister's responsibility to ensure efficiency within his ministry. I've mentioned this to him before. The only reason is that when I look at my correspondence that relates to the Ministry of Transportation, I have a number of constituents who have been contacting me about their frustration with the Presto card system. I raised this issue with the former minister. I have held press conferences here. I have had meetings with Mr. Prichard, the chair of Metrolinx, as well as the CEO. I've had meetings with representatives of the TTC on this issue. When the minister was first appointed, we had a meeting, and I appreciated very much the opportunity to exchange some thoughts. I pointed out to the minister my concern with what is happening on that file. With your permission, Speaker, I'll set the context.

We are fully supportive of a fully integrated transit system across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. It's essential, which is one of the reasons we're proposing that the responsibility for coordinating our transit system across the GTHA be uploaded, so that there can be not only a governance structure that fully coordinates and in-

tegrates that system, but also operational. As part of that fully integrated transit system, we need a fare card that is also fully integrated, so the concept initially was right. A number of years ago, Presto, which would become the branded name of this fare card system, was initiated really through the Ministry of Transportation. As time went on, the development of that card continued. Fast-forward to the TTC. The TTC decided two years ago that they wanted an electronic fare card system, but they wanted a fare card system that was current technology, an open-payment system.

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What is the difference between an open-payment system and a closed-loop system, which we have with Presto? Here's the difference: With Presto, you have to load up that card. Yes, you can tap it and yes, you can use it, but it continually has to be loaded up with value—fair enough. It cannot be used for any purpose other than the transit system. There are electronic fare card systems in use around the world today that are open payment. In other words, they'll accommodate the Presto card system but they will also accommodate a credit card, they will accommodate a bank card. So regardless of where we are, that system can be accommodated. Whether it's someone who lives in the area here, a local resident, or whether it's a visitor from elsewhere, you've got a credit card, you can use it.

The TTC, wanting that advanced technology, put out a request for proposal. They received initially, I believe, something in the range of eight responses. Ultimately, as the details and requirements were made clear, it ended up down to two proponents, and finally there was a selection of one supplier who could meet all of the requirements. That supplier was ACS Xerox, fully compliant with all of the requirements that the TTC had set out in its request for proposal.

The TTC decided to move ahead. They were well along, in terms of their analysis of that proposal, and ready to sign a contract when they received a call from Metrolinx. The call from Metrolinx said, "Put a stop on this. We are asking you—in fact, we're directing you—to put an end to that discussion. You shall use the Presto card." The TTC responded by saying this: "First of all, we've just gone through a public process, a transparent, open bidding process, and we have concluded, based on that process, that this proponent, this supplier, can best meet our needs. Second, based on our analysis," the TTC said, "the Presto card system would cost us \$300 million more in capital costs to implement." The proponent's proposal, ACS Xerox's, involved zero upfront money. They were absorbing the capital investment and would recover it over time.

There was \$300 million that the TTC said, "Wait a minute. We can't afford to pay \$300 million." Here was the response by Metrolinx—and I say to the minister, he was not the minister at the time—obviously with the full endorsement of the Ministry of Transportation, because Metrolinx could not have taken that decision unilaterally: "You will use Presto or we will withhold essential gas

tax revenue that you're relying on for a number of your infrastructure projects in the city of Toronto." That was the one threat. The second was the carrot: "We will pay," Metrolinx said. "We'll pay the \$300 million."

You can imagine the reaction of the TTC and those members who sit on the TTC and the council in the city of Toronto. This is bizarre. We're now being forced to take what they consider to be a less-than-adequate product. You're threatening us—essentially blackmailing us—by saying that, "If you don't, you don't get your gas tax revenues for infrastructure," and you're willing to bribe us with \$300 million.

Speaker, when I first heard about this, I did not believe it. It took a great deal of effort to do the research. It was all confirmed. I had meetings with councillors of the city of Toronto; I had meetings with commissioners of the TTC. All of them confirmed that information.

I took it to the then Minister of Transportation, Mr. Chiarelli. I shared with him my concerns about this. The response that I got was, unfortunately, predictable. I got the typical bureaucratic explanation about why all of this is justified.

In my discussions with the current minister, I said, "My advice to you is, unless you want yet one more scandal brewing in this place, get on top of this." I shared, I believe, with the minister that there is a very uncomfortable aspect to this story. One of those nuances of this story is the fact that some of the same individuals who were consultants on the eHealth file were also consultants on the Presto file.

I'm not here to indict anyone. I am asking the minister to be very diligent in terms of how he deals with this file. I don't relish the idea of having yet one more issue in this House where we're calling into question the competence, the integrity, the thoroughness of any minister of the crown. We've had enough of that. So I'm simply appealing to the minister. I'm saying to the minister, "Look at this. You have reason for concern."

We have reports—not just from the experience of Presto here in the GTA—that it's not performing. Ottawa is having serious concerns. In fact, Presto has had to make a financial offer to Ottawa because they've missed deadlines; they've missed delivery dates. They've made financial concessions to Ottawa, and they're still having problems with the technology.

I'm going to wrap my comments up on this aspect of the file, but for the benefit of the minister, I caution him on this. Presto continues to assure the minister that all is well and that they will be able to meet the targets that the TTC has set out in terms of their expectations of a fare card. But, Speaker, they don't have the technology. The best that they can do is commit to develop it.

I asked the minister to go back and look at the eHealth experience, where eHealth committed month after month after month that they would develop the technology that the government is asking for. Millions and millions of development dollars were poured into that black hole. Today, we still don't have it. Yet we have a provider of an electronic transit fare card that is ready to implement

that technology. We don't need further development dollars.

I ask a simple question of the minister: Why? Why are we trying to thread this needle? I would say—in fact, I've said it—if we had an election tomorrow, and if in the wisdom of the electorate we formed a majority government, the first thing I would recommend that we do, to whoever the Minister of Transportation is, is to put an end to this. Pause it. Call for a public proposal process. Let's allow Presto to be part of that submission. Let them make their proposal. Open it up to the market.

0950

It doesn't have to take a long time. I've heard the response of Presto and Metrolinx, saying this would delay implementation of a card. It would not. Let's take 90 days and get it right. Within 90 days, we would know whether or not there is a company that can deliver a technology that is leading-edge, that can do the job for the greater Toronto area and other parts of the province.

What is the risk of that? Why don't we do that and clear the air? There are so many unanswered questions about how this file is being handled, let alone the fact that Metrolinx is now building an entire bureaucracy to house the Presto facilities, I'm told; I'll ask the minister to look into this. What is the increase in the number of employees at Metrolinx related strictly to the Presto card, at a time when the minister is looking for ways to cut down the size of government?

The minister referred in his comments when he opened debate on the bill before us that this was part of the Drummond report. I commend the minister for taking up that aspect of the Drummond report, all in the interests of reducing the size of government, making government more efficient. Speaker, I ask you: What is efficient about creating a new bureaucracy within Metrolinx that doesn't need to be created?

I'm also going to ask the minister to look into this: In addition to the number of people who are actually on the payroll at Metrolinx related to Presto, how many consultants, who don't show up within the Metrolinx home, are being paid to provide development advice to the Presto file? I think the minister will agree with us that there's something very wrong there.

I'm going to make one other request of the minister, before I close off my remarks here, and that is to look into one other matter. The minister referred—again, I refer to his very eloquent speech when he opened debate on this bill, and he spoke about the reputation that Ontario has of having the safest roads in North America. I think all parties, all governments over the last number of years, take credit for that, because successively, whether it was the drinking and driving legislation, where we have some of the toughest in North America, or whether it's with regard to the graduated driving licensing system, which is, I think, one of the smartest moves that any government could ever have made—I credit the NDP, when they were the government, with bringing that and initiating that particular policy. So we celebrate the fact and we take a great deal of comfort in the fact that

we can point to our roads as being some of the safest in North America.

With that as a concern, I'm going to ask the minister to look into this: Not too long ago, GO Transit took delivery of a number of new buses. These are not intra-city buses; these are buses that take the 400 series of highways, okay? Now, we know that in any other bus transportation company uses the 400 series—that is, a highway transport system—those buses are required to have safety belts.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Safety belts.

Mr. Frank Klees: Yes, safety belts.

I would have thought that a bus order that GO Transit would put in for buses that travel our 400-series highways would at least have the same level of safety precautions as Greyhound or any other carrier is required to have. Guess what, Speaker? Those brand new buses don't have seat belts. I can't fathom why. Surely that's not an area that the minister would say, "We have to save some money here." I'm told that manufacturers of buses like that automatically would put seat belts into those vehicles. So what it comes down to is, there would probably have had to be a special direction to the manufacturer not to install the seat belts.

The minister is looking perplexed. I'm glad that he's looking perplexed, because if he wasn't, then I could only conclude that he would have been complicit with this. I now conclude he didn't know about it. I'm not sure which one is worse, but I am going to ask the minister to look into that. I really think that any passenger that gets onto a GO bus that travels our 400-series highways at 100, 110—and, Minister, I've been behind them when they're travelling 120. Not to have the precaution of seat belts in those buses, I think, is a lapse in judgment.

I know that my colleagues—those who were not listening to me earlier actually left the chamber, and I don't blame them, but they can get this on Hansard, and I can send them a video if they want the special effects.

Finally, I simply would say this to the minister: We will support this legislation, but we look forward to committee, where we will reassert our concerns with many of the administrative shortfalls in the Ministry of Transportation.

Here's a recommendation I would make to him: Before the minister agrees to implement this bill, that he take the steps to review those areas that I brought to his attention to ensure that they're fixed so that we don't have an unintended consequence of this bill that can cause considerable hardship to the people in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for his lengthy but interesting speech on the G34 highway traffic law. Many of us in our constituency offices heard similar examples and stories every day from people in our community. Particularly the ones that I've heard about that have impact are around people losing their licences for suspensions for health issues, and

the length of time that it actually takes to get their licence back.

Although this amendment will assist municipalities and it has the support of AMO and the police service boards, I, too, look forward to getting it into committee to hopefully address the many other issues that I hear about each and every day in my community.

I think that the amendment needs to address some other ways for people to pay fines, because not everyone can perhaps come up with a \$1,000 fine or a \$500 fine at once. I know that there has been a discussion paper which suggested some recommendations for some different ways that people can pay fines. Perhaps you could have a discount if you paid your fine in a timely way, like they do with parking tickets in some communities. If you pay your fine within 10 days, you get 20% off the fine price.

So, although the bill is here before us, I think that there will be much more debate on the issue over the next couple of weeks, and we look forward to getting it to committee. It certainly is a supportable bill.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora for what I thought was a very solid and very constructive speech. I found it a little more engaging than some of his colleagues did, but we have a finer appreciation, you and I, maybe for this matter. I also want to acknowledge his significant contribution to Ontario having the safest roads in North America. When he was transportation minister, he was a very fine minister and left behind a very fine legacy. He has become a friend and provides me with great advice.

I just want to get through as much as I can in a minute and a half, Madam Speaker.

I am quite happy to undertake that kind of review and would be quite happy to work openly with you on it. I will pass on to Ms. Elena Tersigni the compliments of the opposition on her work. I think we appreciate the significant challenge and the need for accuracy.

The suggestion to use registered mail seems to me to be a very constructive one. I will look into the implications of that and will also get back to the member on what advice there is for the ministry to ensure that he is part of that conversation.

There are some very good ideas that the member put forward that I want to commend him on. Checking into keying in phone calls as Air Canada does, so you don't have to wait in line, seems to me to be a very constructive and very useful contribution to this discussion. The idea of warnings, giving people a chance to come into compliance rather than doing a suspension, also seems to me to be a very constructive suggestion that's worthy of work.

Some of these things are governance issues and policy review, and I'll look at that. I'll also sit down with Deputy Layton and review this with her. I know, as many people who have ever worked with her know, what a

remarkably dedicated public servant she is. I'm sure she's listening to us right now.

Physician reports and the review of medical records and a performance standard for turnaround times seems to me to be also a very useful review, and I'm quite happy to do that.

The matters of Presto and those things, I don't have time for, but we can continue that conversation at another time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to join in the debate. I just have to speak to the member from Newmarket–Aurora on behalf of his colleagues in the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus who are here today. Although at some points we perhaps—and I know he's a Leaf fan and he and the member for Nepean–Carleton get into a bit of debate about the Leafs and the Senators, I'm certainly a Senators fan because of my close proximity to the city of Ottawa, but I think there were some members who were excited about the Leafs' win last night, and I'm sure you can appreciate that. So there were a couple of side conversations.

I do want to commend the member for—and I want to use the words that the minister said—his “solid and constructive” debate on Bill 34 this morning. I'm also very pleased that he mentioned Elena Tersigni from the ministry. She's someone I have worked with when I was a political staffer with my predecessor, now Senator Runciman—and also my constituency staff; I know we appreciate her efforts in dealing with our constituency issues. I'm very pleased that the member for Newmarket–Aurora mentioned her today.

I'd also like to speak as municipal affairs and housing critic for our party. Certainly most members are aware that municipalities have been looking for a way to deal with POA fines for a number of years. I know that members of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario are very pleased that the bill was tabled. I know I've had a number of my local councils express interest in the bill and wonder how it's going to be dealt with at committee.

I look forward to, at some future point, speaking on the bill myself and providing some other details of constituency issues that I think the minister needs to hear. Thank you for giving me the opportunity, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to put in my comments on this bill, G34, the MTO bill for municipal fine collections. On the premise, the bill sounds like it's a good idea, because municipalities are facing similar challenges as provinces are facing, as well as budget reasons. But I think we have to always remember, when we're talking about—when times are challenging to find funds, when we implement changes that are going to hold the person in the middle in a situation that could actually cause them more damage because we are trying to get the money from them, that's where I think we need to take a

look. The suggestions that the member from Newmarket–Aurora made were quite good.

In my previous life as an insurance broker, one of the things we had to do was send a registered letter when your insurance was being cancelled, because you have to have insurance. But you also have to have a licence to drive. I never understood why the MTO was allowed not to do their due diligence when someone's licence was suspended and not properly legally notify them. Because many times there's that example where someone moves, and they don't get the information, and they're driving around very innocently thinking that everything is fine. They may have had the fine, as the member did, nine and a half years ago. Nine and a half years is a long time to remember if you've paid something or not, and often-times people have paid a fine and there's a mix-up. If they're not notified by a registered letter that their licence has been suspended, it becomes a situation that rolls out of control.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Newmarket–Aurora has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank the member from Welland, the Minister of Transportation and the members from Leeds–Grenville and London–Fanshawe for their comments.

Speaker, in this place, we do our best to pass legislation that will be in the public interest. From time to time, we get parts of it wrong. I think that what, hopefully, we have focused on in this bill is an opportunity to improve this bill when it gets to committee. But sometimes the improvement is not necessarily focused on the bill; it is on the supporting administration and implementation process around the bill, which is why I wanted to take this morning's opportunity to share some of those concerns with the minister, with a view to ensuring that, in the end, we actually achieve the objective that this bill sets forward.

With that in mind, I want to give a bit of a promo to my private member's bill, which will be debated on Thursday, entitled “preserving existing communities.” Again, it's an example where existing legislation has had and continues to have some unintended consequences, namely the Places to Grow Act that calls for intensification of communities. We all support ensuring that we minimize urban sprawl, but what has happened with that bill is that, unfortunately, a lot of existing communities have intensification forced on them that is undermining quality of life and land values. My private member's bill will ensure that in municipal decisions relating to that very narrow aspect of intensification of existing communities, the decision of the municipality will be final.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1009 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome a good friend of mine, an insurance broker from New Hamburg and Elmira, of course, Mr. Steve Wagler from Josslin Insurance. Welcome to Queen's Park, and I'm sure we'll see you later on today.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome the 12,000-strong insurance brokers of Ontario here today for their Queen's Park awareness day, and also the president of the insurance brokers of Ontario, Debbie Thompson, who happens to be the sister of Steven Blackett, who is the minister of consumer affairs in the wonderful, beautiful country of Barbados. Welcome, Debbie.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to give a warm welcome to James Varley, who is here with his grade 10 civics class from Greenwood College School in Toronto. A special thank you to his father, Peter Varley, who works in our leader's office, for letting us all know.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: They're not in the House, but I want to welcome Equal Voice here at Queen's Park today and invite everyone to attend the reception.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: It is indeed my pleasure to acknowledge the page from Etobicoke Centre, Madeline Smart-Reed. Her mom, Sarah Smart, is here, and her grandmother Mary Smart. They're both in the Speaker's gallery.

I also say a very special welcome to Silverthorn Collegiate, who are going to enjoy this morning's festivities in the House.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd just like to introduce a local insurance broker from the great riding of Leeds–Grenville. Please join me in welcoming Brian Purcell from James Purcell Insurance Broker in Spencerville.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm looking forward to introducing the heart and soul of my constituency operation in Thunder Bay–Superior North, my executive assistant, Larry Joy. Larry, come on, get up.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce constituent Debbie Thompson, as well as Chelsea Smyth, Philomena Comerford and Arthur Lofsky. Many of us know Arthur.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to introduce Chris Streib, a physiotherapist and president of Talbot Trail Physiotherapy in St. Thomas, and his wife, Christine Zacharias. They're here to see how we do business.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to introduce two special guests from the beautiful town of Niagara-on-the-Lake; they're with the 1812 bicentennial committee. They are Tony Chisholm and Jim Alexander. I know we're not allowed to show props in the House—I know that's a very strict rule—so I will not show this prop, which is the burning of Niagara-on-the-Lake that will take place on December 6—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure the member from Niagara Falls would not want to have me not do my job by telling him it is a prop, and he will put it down.

With us today in the Speaker's gallery are the mother and father of page Rosalin Dubois from Brant: Suzanne Dubois and Greg Dubois—and brother Thomas, who says he can do a better job than his sister. Welcome, and we're glad you're here with us. I think I've initiated a family feud; I'm not sure.

BOSTON TRAGEDY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker, for acknowledging me. Yesterday we all witnessed a horrific tragedy in Boston at the Boston Marathon, and of course, our sympathies and our condolences go with the families of the victims. I seek, Speaker, unanimous consent from the members to observe a moment of silence for the victims and their families, in light of the tragedy yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour has sought unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence for the victims and the families and the first responders of the Boston tragedy.

Is there consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Please stand.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the Legislature, we offer our condolences, our heartfelt prayers and our love to those victims.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order for the third party.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I realize I should have done this earlier, but I missed that Monsieur de Laplante from Timmins is here, along with the insurance brokers from the city of Timmins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I would also open by commenting on the cowardly acts of terrorism in Boston and that our caucus, as well, offers our heartfelt condolences to the families of those who were sadly affected.

Speaker, my question this morning is for the Premier. The Auditor General told us that the cost of the Mississauga gas plant is not the \$190 million that you talked about but, rather, a whopping \$275 million.

He also told us of the subtle change in language the Liberals used, from saying the "total cost" to now saying "cost to the taxpayer." That's because the OPA was instructed to add \$85 million on the hydro bills of ratepayers. There's the subtle difference.

Premier, you played with words to get around telling us the true cost of cancelling Mississauga. What's the difference between a taxpayer and a ratepayer, and will you apologize to the people of Ontario for misleading them?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

The member will withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, on behalf of the people of Ontario, I want to send our thoughts and prayers to our friends in Boston, to the families of those killed and injured and to everyone affected by this shocking event.

Races like the Boston Marathon really are a demonstration of human endurance and a sense of community. I want the people of Boston to know that we're here for them, that we offer them our support in any way that we can.

I want to thank the auditor for his work and accept his findings. The auditor has provided Ontarians with a longer-term assessment than the original assessment by estimating costs and savings over 20 years.

Let's be clear: We listened to the residents of Oakville and Mississauga, and we relocated the gas plants. Do we agree that the plants shouldn't have been located there? Yes, we do. Do we agree that the plants should have been relocated sooner? Yes, we do. Do we take responsibility and are we going to move forward, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock for a moment, please.

Like all of us in this place, I am aware of the situation that is happening today with responses, and I'm going to ask you to contain yourself as much as possible, to get to your questions and to the answers. Let's try to keep it at a level at which we can all hear, and I will immediately be looking to people to quiet them down.

Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Premier, what was even more revealing from the auditor was the fact that millions of dollars were needed for transmission, gas connection and other costs made necessary by moving to your new location. That's because, Premier, there's a right way to move these plants and an expensive way, and we learned from the auditor that you picked the most expensive way possible.

The auditor told us he will be using the same criteria in telling us how much your Oakville cancellation really cost. You're sticking to \$40 million, but the OPA shows that those same extra costs the auditor will look at using will bring this to \$991 million.

1040

Just like yesterday, Premier, we're going to get to the truth. Why don't you just tell us now the total cost of cancelling Oakville?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy is going to want to speak to some of the specifics, but I want to be clear—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I didn't think that was such an outrageous comment; I know the Minister of Energy is going to want to speak to the specifics.

I want to talk about my responsibility and our responsibility to move forward on this. It is very clear to me—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I listened to what the Auditor General said yesterday. It's very clear to me that he has made calculations, and I am very glad that he has shed some light on this. That's exactly why we asked him to look at both of the situations.

It has been my priority to be open and transparent on this issue. I asked for the Auditor General to look at the Oakville situation. We've expanded the scope of the committee, and I take responsibility for getting that information out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, we learned two things over at the justice committee this morning from the sworn testimony of Shelly Jamieson, former cabinet secretary. First, she swore that cabinet knew of Project Vapour. You and a handful of cabinet ministers stood up and said, "You have all the documents," when this proves you knew we didn't. She also swore that cabinet knew of the extra costs for the Oakville cancellation, far above the \$40 million you claim. In fact, she called them "buckets of costs."

Premier, documents prove you were at the cabinet meetings when these extra costs were disclosed. Will you stand up now, put an end to this charade and tell all Ontarians how much Oakville cost?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, when the Auditor General was given the responsibility to look into the Mississauga issue, he worked on that file for over half a year. He worked co-operatively with the Ontario Power Authority and officials from his office. He stated—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville, come to order—and Prince Edward—Hastings.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: He stated very clearly yesterday that he had access to all documents. It was not a problem for him to gather the information.

The auditor's office is, again, looking into the Oakville situation. They have been doing that for some time;

they're going to be doing it over another period of months. There are difficult calculations; they're complex files. As in the case of Mississauga, we were not getting interim reports on what the auditor was finding, and in the case of Oakville, we're not going to be getting interim reports. So the speculation on the part of the critic is totally vacuous.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier.

The transition from McGuinty to Wynne has been seamless and is now complete. Premier, you've picked up exactly where your predecessor left off. You have made empty statements about being transparent and releasing all of the information with respect to the gas plant cancellations and relocations. These claims are nothing but attempts to distract from the fact that you only give the answers when you are legally compelled to do so.

The auditor stated clearly that you were aware for months that the cost to cancel the Mississauga gas plant was substantially higher than \$190 million. Why didn't you order your Minister of Energy to disclose that fact instead of continuing to insist that your false numbers were correct?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Since I came into this office, I have done everything in my power to make sure that the information that people were asking for was available. I asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville plant. I asked that we expand the justice committee's mandate so that it could ask a much broader range of questions. I have said I will appear before the committee. We are making sure that the questions that need to be answered are answered. The reality is, every member in this House—all parties—agreed that these gas plants should be relocated, and there was a cost associated with those relocations. That is unfortunate, but that is the reality, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Start the clock. Oh, that got quiet.

Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: To the Premier, as well: Premier, your answers completely betray what we already know: that you have no intention of being straight with this Legislature or the people of Ontario. For months, you've been asked on a daily basis for the total cost of your politically motivated decision to cancel the Mississauga gas plant. You told the public that the cost was one amount when you knew it to be higher. They have a right to know how much of their money you're going to waste. In spite of the guarantees of your so-called new government, you chose not to disclose that figure. You've done everything you can to avoid being transparent. Taxpayer or ratepayer are one and the same, and they are entitled to the truth.

End this now. Release all of the costs related to the Oakville power plant cancellation and relocation. Do it now, Premier. The people of Ontario deserve nothing less.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is simply not true that I have avoided, or that our government has avoided, getting the information out. It's just not true, Mr. Speaker. I have done everything I can to get the experts who understand what the costs are.

As the Minister of Energy said, it has been a complex process. It has been a six-month process for the Auditor General to come up with the cost. I am neither an accountant nor an engineer. I am not an expert in these areas. I think what we need is the information that is developed by, that is compiled by, the experts, which is why I asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville plant. I want the information to be available.

The members opposite can rail as much as they want. The reality is, everyone in this Legislature believed that those gas plants should be relocated. We acted on that, and there was a cost associated with that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, the people are the final arbiter. The auditor's report has shone a light on all of the holes in your story. Why are you here, Premier—to set an example, or to play politics and protect the interests of the Liberal Party?

We have 600,000 people out of work in this province, and you're wasting the time of this Legislature by refusing to come clean and disclose the information. Compliance with orders is not transparency and full disclosure; that's only doing what you are compelled to do.

Today, Premier, I ask you to do the right thing. Will you release the total cost of the cancellation of the Oakville power plant, or do we have to wait for another auditor's report confirming what he did on Mississauga yesterday? Will he have to confirm on Oakville at a later date that you have lied to the people of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to take this further. I said this yesterday, and I'm going to say it today to reinforce it: If there is an effort to use unparliamentary language, I am going to skip questions—and I mean "skip questions." So the rotation is there, the answer is there, but if it continues, using unparliamentary language that you know is not allowed, I will skip.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to address the issue of Oakville. On September 24, 2012, the Ontario Power Authority put the actual memorandum of understanding, the terms of the agreement, on their website. It indicated quite clearly in that document—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent, come to order.

1050

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It indicated quite clearly that the sunk costs were \$40 million. It also indicated that there were a number of other matters that had to be addressed, including the issue of the lower power price and the impact that would have, and the cost of some of the equipment that was provided.

Mr. Speaker, there is an issue of accountability here. The issue of accountability is where we site our energy infrastructure. It is not appropriate. The Premier has indicated it could be much better. She expanded the terms of the committee to find ways and means to have a better way of siting the project.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to begin by joining with the Premier and the opposition—for New Democrats—in our condolences to the people of Boston as well as the people from around the world who were participating in the Boston Marathon, and their families and supporters. I think we were all shocked by the incidents yesterday, and we certainly do want to say that our thoughts and our prayers are with all of those folks as they struggle through what happened and the aftermath.

Speaker, my question is to the Premier. On September 25, 2012, the now Premier was pretty decisive about the cost of the Mississauga gas plant. She said, “The cost of that relocation was \$190 million.” The auditor put forward a different, higher, figure yesterday.

Does the Premier stand by her claim?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I’ve been very clear. I’m appreciative of the auditor for his work. He’s looked at a longer-term assessment of the cost. He’s estimated the cost and the savings over 20 years, and so the number is a different number. The whole purpose of the Auditor General looking at these costs was to make sure that it was understood exactly what the costs were. So I appreciate that he has done that work. I appreciate that he’s doing the work on the Oakville gas plant as I asked him to do.

But Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we all agree that the gas plants shouldn’t have been located where they were. We agree on that. We agree that the information should have been clear. I absolutely acknowledge that. I take responsibility for getting the information out and for fixing the process going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier and this government have made a series of claims. They insisted that the cost of cancelling the private power deal in Mississauga was \$180 million. Then, they insisted it was \$190 million. Now, they insist that the cost of the private power deal in Oakville was \$40 million. And they insist that consumers will be protected.

Does the Premier back any of these claims?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party knows, on February 7 I wrote to the Auditor General requesting that he examine the cost of the Oakville relocation. He agreed. He’s working with the OPA, and we look forward to his report.

But again, we listened to the people of Oakville. I wish that the community engagement, the process, had been better up front. I wish that the information had been more clearly released earlier. But the reality is that we all agreed that that gas plant should be relocated. We acted on that, and we know that there is a cost associated with that decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is about the sort of government that the Premier is running. This government signed private power deals. They defended those deals and insisted that they were absolutely necessary. Then when it looked like it would cost them political power, they cancelled the deals, and not only did they stick the public with the bills, they’ve gone out of their way to hide the details and the real costs.

How can the Premier stand in this House and act as if this is acceptable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really need to take issue with the notion that we are not trying to be transparent on this. From day one when I came into this job, and through the leadership race, I was very clear that the information that was being asked for needed to be available. That’s why I took the actions that I did as soon as I was in this office. That’s why I said, “Let’s make sure there’s a committee in place that has the broadest mandate possible to ask the questions that need to be asked.” That’s why I asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville situation. That’s why I said I would appear before committee. We have attempted at every turn to provide the information that was being asked for.

The Auditor General is doing his work. I appreciate the work he did on the Mississauga plant. I look forward to the report. Do we want it to be different next time? Do we want the process to be better and the community engagement to be better? Absolutely we do, Mr. Speaker.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I guess day one is all a matter of perspective, Speaker. From day one, New Democrats were FOIing those private power contracts, and we couldn’t get the information from this government years ago.

My next question is for the Premier. What’s really shocking for people is, the Premier doesn’t seem to be showing any remorse or regret. Instead, it’s just full steam ahead with politics as usual. Yesterday, Ontarians learned that the people of this province are going to be paying \$275 million to cancel that Mississauga plant. That money could have been used to wipe out home care waiting lists or to put 25,000 young people to work.

Why can't the Premier admit that this was cynical politics at its worst and actually show some remorse for this waste of public money?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I've said very clearly that I think the process should have been different. If the process had been different, then we wouldn't be in this situation where we're having to pay these costs.

The reality is that there were costs that were associated with making this decision. I said weeks ago—months ago, now—that this was a political decision, Mr. Speaker. It was a political decision that every party agreed with. Whoever formed government, whoever was in this role, if they were going to follow through on that commitment to cancel these plants, there was going to be a cost associated with that. What we don't know is what the parties opposite thought those costs were going to be.

We have taken action. We have made those relocations. There are costs associated with them, and I've been clear that we need every piece of information open and available to the people who are asking the questions, because that is the right thing to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I guess I was right, Speaker: politics as usual, personified in the response there. People in Ontario are hoping for a little more from their government than the same old evasions and the same old excuses. Yesterday they learned that they're going to be paying \$275 million to cancel that Mississauga plant. That's \$85 million more than the already astronomical \$190 million that the Premier insisted was the tally in this very House back in September 2012.

People are tired of being zapped by the Liberals in this province. Why can't the Premier simply say that this was the wrong thing to do and apologize on behalf of the Liberal Party and her government for this cynical waste of public money?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want the people of Ontario to know that I believe that the process should have been different. It should have been different, Mr. Speaker. We should have had a different process to locate the plants and we should have had more community engagement. There should have been a different process up front. I don't know how much clearer I can be on that, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't know how I can say that more clearly: that I believe the process should have been different. The reality is that all parties agreed that they're—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry. I'm going to mention the member again, and the minister responsible for seniors will join him.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've lost my thread. How could that happen?

The reality is, we have been clear that the process should have been different. We need to have a different process going forward. The Auditor General has provided us with information that is very necessary. The committee will continue to do its work, and we look forward to its report on Oakville.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier lost her thread because she's weaving a tale; that's the problem.

This should be a pretty simple issue, Speaker. The money spent scrapping this power plant could have hired 4,700 nurses in this province. It could have eliminated the wait-list for home care over and over again. It could have provided some relief for households that are paying the highest electricity rates in the entire country. Instead, it was handed to US hedge funds and to private power companies. Instead of coming clean about this, the government spent a year scrambling to hide the facts from the people they stuck with the bill. When will the Premier give the people some indication that she actually knows that this was wrong?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the government listened to the residents of Mississauga by relocating the facility. The NDP and the Conservatives made the same election promise. When the three parties made this commitment in November 2011, none of the parties knew what the costs of relocation would be.

The Auditor General's report demonstrated how complex and difficult the negotiations and the calculations were. It took the auditor's office over half a year to do the report, which we received last week.

The issue really is, how do we locate, how do we site our energy infrastructure? As the Premier said, we have to do better. The committee has the mandate to do that. Why don't we work together to get better rules for siting our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier.

Speaker, on September 24, 2011, according to the auditor, an Ontario Liberal Party news release announced, as an election campaign promise, that the Greenfield plant in Mississauga would not go forward. "The Liberal Party won the election on October 6, 2011." There's a reason that the Auditor General makes that point in his report—that it was the Ontario Liberal Party. The co-chair of the Ontario Liberal Party at the time was none other than Kathleen Wynne, the Premier.

The Premier may not be, as she indicated, an accountant, and she may not be an engineer, but she is the Premier. As the Premier, I would ask her this question: Why can the Premier not stand in her place and say to the people of Ontario, "We made a mistake"?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said that we take responsibility for making sure that all of the information that is being asked for is provided. I take full responsibility for that, Mr. Speaker.

I have also said that the process should have been different. I've been clear about that. It should have been different, and we need a different process going forward.

I have also said that this was a political decision. It was a political decision that would have been taken, ostensibly—by all accounts from the other parties—by the other parties had they been in government. It was a political decision that, in the implementation, had business costs associated with it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, there's an important thread missing in the Premier's comments, and that is that it was the government of the day that decided to put the plant there in the first place. That was not a decision of the opposition. It was not a decision of the third party. That government made the mistake of putting it there to begin with. Therefore, they share all of the responsibility for the costs.

My question is this: Given that it was a Liberal Party decision to incur \$275 million of costs, will the Premier agree that it's the Liberal Party of Ontario that should pay that money?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let me remind—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I have to wade through this and individually mention somebody—I want to give everybody an understanding: When I give you a warning, that's the last time I will speak to you, other than to name you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let me remind the honourable member about the Mississauga South PC candidate robocall: "Hi there. This is Geoff Janoscik, your Mississauga South Ontario PC candidate. I'm calling about the McGuinty-Sousa power plant that the Liberal government decided to build in your backyard. I'm against this power plant, and as your MPP, I will fight to stop the power plant from being built.... Our team has been out knocking on doors every single evening for several months, talking about the power plant and making sure that we defeat the Liberals in this riding and put an end to their bad decisions"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Leeds–Grenville: If it was a test, you won. You're warned.

Answer?

Hon. John Milloy: What's interesting is, today in front of the committee, the Liberal members called on all four of the candidates for both parties in this riding to come forward, and they couldn't make it. I'm very anxious to have them come forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: For nearly a year, the Liberal government claimed that the Mississauga gas plant cancellation cost about \$190 million. Yesterday, the Auditor General told us that it was \$275 million, a full \$85 million more than your government has been willing to admit. Today, Shelly Jamieson, former secretary of cabinet, told Ontarians that she knew there would be more than the sunk costs and that the Premier and ministers would know that.

Premier, why did the Liberal government say the cost was one thing when everyone knew it was far higher?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The Auditor General has come forward with a report, and the Auditor General is coming forward with a report on the Oakville situation. But I think what's interesting about Shelly Jamieson's testimony this morning is that she confirmed that last week, when the opposition stood up with a document related to the negotiations going on and claimed that it had somehow been withheld by the government, that document was in fact outside the scope of any of the requests that were made by the committee.

We have been prepared for a long time to furnish all the documents to the committee, but that honourable member and other members of the opposition sat in their place and voted against it. I think it's time that we allow the committee to undertake its work, we allow the Auditor General to finish his work, and the committee to come forward with some profitable advice—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's very clear the government doesn't want to tell the truth on this issue—does not want to answer questions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There was so much noise that I didn't hear, but there seemed to have been a concern about what was said, and if you did, I would expect—but I will let it go. Please ask your question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you. Shelly Jamieson told the committee that the government was looking at options for cancelling the Mississauga plant before they'd begun—not destruction, construction; destruction came

later—before they received the 14% financing that Ontarians are now paying for.

Premier, the Liberal government planned the Mississauga gas plant. The Liberal government wanted to cancel it so it could save seats in an election. For nearly a year, the Liberal government hid the costs. Does the Premier think this is a good way to do business?

Hon. John Milloy: Here is what the NDP member for Mississauga had to say about the Mississauga plant—and I quote from InsideToronto.com, September 26: “We wouldn’t build it.”

Here’s what Torstar News Service had to say, September 16, 2011: “Etobicoke–Lakeshore NDP candidate Dionne Coley also pledged to fight the plant.”

The National Post, September 29, 2011: “[L]ocal NDP candidate Anju Sikka soon issued statements concurring with the new Liberal cancellation.”

The Liberal members of the committee invited both the Progressive Conservative and the New Democratic candidates for those ridings to come forward to the committee and talk about their calculations and the work they did when they promised that in the last election. None of them were available today, and I hope that that member will persuade his colleagues to come before the committee.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. My constituents in Oak Ridges–Markham rely on public transit to get to work and school, to reduce congestion on the roads and keep our air clean. In particular, GO trains are very important and popular for us in Oak Ridges–Markham, as there are five GO train stations in my riding, and we are served by three different lines. Last year, additional GO train service on weekends and holidays helped my constituents move along the Barrie line with more convenience and flexibility. I heard from many residents of King City and northern Richmond Hill that they really appreciated the implementation of additional GO services.

Minister, could you please update the House on what the plan is this year for GO Transit on the Barrie line?

1110

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As you know, our Premier has made transit and transportation, and taking on congestion issues and the infrastructure deficit in this province, a priority of this government, and I’m very proud to have the honour of being part of the team that’s delivering it.

This summer we are adding, to that end, four southbound and four northbound train trips on the Barrie GO line as well as increased GO bus service on weekends and holidays. This will begin on June 29 and will be running through to September 2.

I also want to acknowledge my friend from Oak Ridges–Markham for her incredible advocacy on this. And to Mayor Lehman in Barrie—Barrie is responding in the community by increasing their bus fleet and their

transit services by an amazing 30%, to match up with our GO service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the minister for that update. I am glad to see that our government is making summer travel even more convenient.

GO Transit’s seasonal weekend schedules sound much improved. I know that people in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham will welcome transit investments on weekends that make public transit a better choice for many of them, reducing congestion on our roads and contributing to a better quality of life for Ontario families.

There is also a great deal of interest in introducing two-way, all-day service on all GO rail corridors for commuters in York region. I know it will require significant expansion of the supporting railway infrastructure. However, it is sorely needed.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please provide an update on the progress we’ve made in creating a more convenient and efficient public transit system in the GTHA?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member, and I will give some more details. I also just want to thank the member from York–Simcoe and the member from Barrie for joining me for the announcements on the Highway 400 and the GO service.

One of the good reasons we have GO service improvements to Barrie—and for all of our constituents—is because we are going to be putting, with the federal government and municipalities, \$109 million in repairs on Highway 400 and the interchanges, so to avoid the congestion, people will be able to use the GO service.

But we’re also doing things such as moving to complete two-way, all-day GO service on every line. That’s part of our strategy with the Big Move.

As many people drive to this, we’re adding 3,500 parking spaces right now to our parking spaces in those areas, in those communities, where automobiles are the choice of residents to get around.

We have integrated all 11 transit authorities right now under the Presto card, so you don’t have to fuss with multiple passes. This is an amazing investment in transit across the greater Golden Horseshoe, and we’re very proud to be moving forward.

I thank the member for her question.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question also is to the Premier. The auditor was quite clear yesterday that the real cost of the cancellation of the power plant was \$275 million, not the \$190 million you and your cabinet had continually suggested. The auditor only reduced that number because we don’t have to pay for the power from that cancelled plant now. Your government even paid the company of the power plant for the cost of its land and then you let them keep it.

You were briefed, as was cabinet, and I quote from Shelly Jamieson, who said there were known “buckets of costs” that exceeded \$190 million. Premier, given you

were briefed on these “buckets of costs” exceeding \$190 million, why did you tell this House on September 25 and every day thereafter the wrong number?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Auditor General performed his work for a period of over half a year. When you read the report of the Auditor General, there are over 21 items that either had reductions or increases in costs. They were very technical in nature, and it took him that long period of time to review it.

We have said quite clearly that we accept the auditor’s report. We’ve also said in this House, and the Premier has said, that the root cause is that we need to do better in siting our energy facilities. That’s the core root accountability issue here.

We’ve put before the committee the responsibility to try to find better ways to site our energy infrastructure. I think we should have some common purpose in that committee to try to determine better ways to site our energy infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I’m going to go back to the Premier because she has some serious answers to give this assembly.

Shelly Jamieson’s testimony was damning. The auditor’s report was appalling. The only thing that has become very clear has been this: This government is rotten to the core, and it’s time for them to leave.

The Ontario PC caucus has said for quite some time that they should never have built that power plant in the first place. It has now cost taxpayers in this province \$275 million.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Please finish.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They’re forcing taxpayers to pay \$275 million so Charles Sousa could keep his seat.

Speaker, I have a question for the Premier: How can you put forward a credible budget in this assembly when the biggest beneficiary of that power plant will be the person collecting that \$275 million from the taxpayers in this province? You can’t do it. Step aside.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: To the opposition: The Mississauga and Oakville energy facilities were seat-gainer programs, because they promised quite clearly that they were going to relocate the sites. They did that because they hoped to win those seats. So it was a seat-gainer program for them. None of the parties who promised in November 2011 to relocate those facilities knew what the costs were going to be when those commitments were made. They were election commitments made by all parties; nobody had the cost at that time. The auditor’s report showed quite clearly that it was complex, detailed and technical. It took the auditor over half a year to calculate the costs. They should be the last ones to complain

about the calculation of the cost. They had no idea what it was going to cost.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. In the last few months, Windsor and Essex county residents have lost dozens of hospital beds, nurses and front-line care workers. They’ve seen long-promised new beds evaporate. Budget cuts are threatening the services available to infants at the NICU, and Windsor CCAC is facing significant cuts to address funding shortfalls. Yet as we found out yesterday, this government was happy to spend \$275 million securing threatened seats for their MPPs.

What does the Premier have to say to the people of Windsor and Essex county who have watched their health care be whittled to the bone while the Liberal government spends millions of dollars to save seats in an election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health is going to want to speak to the specific system issue, but I just want to be clear once again, because I think in this context it’s important to say once again that I wish, I believe, I would have desired that the process had been different. I wish that we had been able to have a better process up front so that a different decision could have been made so we wouldn’t have been at this place. But the reality is that we listened to the communities both in Oakville and in Mississauga. We made a decision which is a decision that all of the parties would have made. It was a political decision, as everyone in this House agreed. We made the decision, we moved forward, and there were costs associated with the relocation of the plants.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Better process comes with better governance.

In recent times, the Windsor and Essex county region has struggled with a 9% unemployment rate, cuts to health care, cuts to seniors’ care and broken promises about the Grace hospital site—and a government willing to throw away the region’s gaming industry to benefit private casino operators from down south. Now we find out that Ontarians are on the hook for massive penalties being paid to American hedge funds for contracts signed by and cancelled by the Liberal government.

The hard times and job losses facing Windsor are no secret and they are no myth. When will this government stop throwing taxpayer dollars at American corporations and start protecting the services that we need most?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is making allegations that simply are not true about our health care system in Windsor. Indeed, the facts speak for themselves. Since 2003, the budget of Windsor Regional Hospital has grown by \$100 million. That’s an 83% increase in funding to that hospital. We’ve seen results from that. What we’re seeing is lower wait times. We’ve

seen a reduction of 86 days for hip replacement, 46 days for outpatient CT scans, 56 days' less waiting for people needing cancer surgery.

1120

At the same time, Speaker, we are enhancing home care supports because that is fundamental to the transformation in our health care system. We're seeing more people getting care from family health teams, and 320 new long-term-care beds are being built.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES SERVICES AUX IMMIGRANTS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de la citoyenneté et de l'Immigration, l'honorable Michael Coteau.

My riding of Etobicoke North, Speaker, as you'll appreciate, is home to many newcomers who come from all over the world. Of course, when they come to ridings like Etobicoke North and across the GTA and beyond, integrating successfully into our communities benefits everyone.

In Ontario, of course, we have long valued diversity and its economic contributions. Our diverse population is a tremendous asset.

Now, Speaker, as you'll appreciate, with the economic times being hard, more than ever, newcomers are critical to our economic development and meeting our future labour market needs. Putting their skills to work will be key to our economic growth.

I ask the minister: What is our government doing to help newcomers settle in Ontario, and what are some of the ideas, instruments and investments that we are making in this domain?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for Etobicoke North for the question. I know he's a great champion for his community.

Our government is committed to supporting community agencies that provide valuable settlement services to newcomers. Across the province, we've expanded our support for newcomer settlement services. In total, Mr. Speaker, 98 community organizations across this province, including the north and rural communities, will receive funding for important language and job training, programs and community services.

Enhancing community settlement services is part of the province's immigration strategy and supports the Ontario government's efforts to build a strong economy and a fair society. Settlement agencies in Ontario help more than 80,000 newcomers each year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker, and through you to the minister: I'd also like to recognize the fact that he visited my riding, Etobicoke North, last week to announce \$14.9 million in funding in this whole particular area.

I think that people, especially in Etobicoke North, sense on the ground that our initiatives, directives and

programs are enhancing lives. As we heard from a newcomer during the announcement—my constituents tell me that the settlement services are making a difference. These services are helping newcomers contribute to their communities, go to school, develop new and marketable skill sets, and strengthen our workforce, which of course leads to more prosperous, successful and integrated lives.

Monsieur le Ministre, pouvez-vous donner à mes électeurs en savoir plus sur le travail du gouvernement pour les nouveaux arrivants dans ma communauté?

Hon. Michael Coteau: One of the main goals of our immigration strategy is to help newcomers and their families settle and achieve success. More newcomers come to Ontario than any other province in this country. That's why we've increased our efforts to support newcomers across this province. Since 2003, our government has increased settlement services funding by over 80%. The funding is needed now more than ever because of the federal cuts equalling \$85 million that have happened in settlement services over the last three years.

Our new government has made investments to support newcomers in ridings like Etobicoke North. These investments will support the great work of organizations like the Rexdale Women's Centre, the Dejinta Beesha, and the Community MicroSkills Development Centre. These organizations help more than 4,000 people each year.

I'm proud that our new government is supporting newcomers in the beautiful riding of Etobicoke North and across the province. When newcomers succeed, we all succeed.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier.

Premier, you stood in this House and repeatedly told us your version of the truth and the supposed cost of the Mississauga gas plant, saying it was \$190 million. Yesterday, the Auditor General, who is far more believable than you are, told us the real truth: that the costs were \$275 million, some 50% more.

I'm going to quote you, Premier, from Hansard on September 25, 2012: "We are relocating a gas plant from Oakville to eastern Ontario. The total cost of the relocation is \$40 million."

Premier, given your rather liberal interpretation of the truth when it came to the Mississauga statement, are you still standing by the \$40 million? You know the costs; you need not wait for the Auditor General to expose you once again. Tell the truth. Stand in your place—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: On September 24, 2012, the Ontario Power Authority posted on their website the actual memorandum of understanding. It's the contract between the proponent and the OPA and the provincial government. It states in the contract itself: \$40 million are the sunk costs. It states in the contract itself that there

are other calculations that are being made. Those calculations relate to reduce power site and to the provision of certain equipment.

Mr. Speaker, that document is the contract—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Pembroke.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Closing in.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, they're trying to make a sow's ear out of a silk purse.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is warned.

Supplementary. The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I redirect the question to the Premier. Premier, you have known and actually have the answers—you're in charge. The buck stops with you, as far as I'm concerned. You know all of the answers. All I'm asking today is a simple question: Is the cost of the Oakville plant still, in your opinion, \$40 million?

Stand in your place, Premier. I'd ask you to stand in your place and say what you said on September 25, 2012. Should we believe what you said then or should we believe what you're saying now?

You knew the real costs. The buck stops with you. I ask you once again, are you going to stick to your figure of the \$40 million? Was it true then? Is it still true now, that number?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The relocation costs of Oakville are contained in a contract that has been negotiated. That has been on the public record, on the Ontario Power Authority website, since September 24, 2012.

The people of Ontario want some unity of purpose coming out of this Legislature. The committee has the mandate to create the rules for better siting of our power infrastructure so that these things would not happen in the future. The people of Ontario are looking for this place to provide some leadership collectively in how we relocate or locate our power plants and our energy facilities. We expect the people of Ontario to be respected. We expect this Legislature, through that committee that has the mandate, to create some better rules.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety. Minister, the situation at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre escalated again last week. An improvised weapon has still not been found and we also saw a lockdown that resulted in a fire and two injuries.

When I asked last September, the minister said that the government had developed a 12-point plan to deal with

these exact issues, but reality speaks to worsening conditions.

When will the minister do her duty and develop a real plan to bring Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre up to standard?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you for this question. As you know, Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre is on my top priority in the Ministry of Correctional Services. The deputy and the assistant deputy are working very diligently to solve the problem there.

1130

Yes, I have presented a three-point plan to resolve the problem at Elgin-Middlesex. We have done one of them; 24-hour nursing is already in place, and I am very pleased about it.

There was an incident last week, and I can confirm that the search and the lockdown have been ended. I cannot talk about the investigation because there is an investigation going on, but I can say that we'll take every measure possible to redress the situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Minister, just last week Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre was on lockdown after staff issued a refusal to search due to lack of safety equipment. I hope the minister understands that it's a question of safety for both the guards as well as the inmates. Two people were sent to the hospital because government mismanagement allowed the situation to escalate.

Will the minister act now to guarantee safety at the Elgin-Middlesex facility?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will differ in opinion with the member from the London area.

I visited the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. We've worked very closely with the administration, and my ministry will continue to address the situation. My questions are, why is this happening, why is there stuff that is coming into the detention centre? We have a lot of whys that the investigation will give us answers to.

BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Premier in her capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food. There has been recent concern among the Ontario Beekeepers' Association, including members in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, that the government is planning to repeal the Bees Act. It is this legislation that guides beekeepers and that gives bee inspectors the authority to inspect Ontario apiaries and enforce the regulations designed to keep our bee population healthy. Concerns have arisen within the beekeeping community that a posting on the regulatory registry may mean that the government is intending to do away with this legislation.

Premier, can you please provide the House with an update on this situation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan for his question. This is a really important issue, and I want to thank the Ontario

Beekeepers' Association for their work in representing their members. I want to clarify the situation and set aside the concerns of the beekeepers. Proposed changes to the Bees Act were posted for comment in January and February. These changes would simply update the list of diseases and pests named in the Bees Act. It's a direct response to the industry's concerns, and it supports bee health and swift detection and timely response to emerging issues.

From an economic perspective, the changes will improve access to more markets for Ontario's beekeepers. This is something that there has been a lot of concern about. I heard about it early on. That's the situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Issues related to a healthy bee population not only in Ontario but nationally and internationally have gained prominence in recent years. I've met with a number of individuals and groups in my riding concerned with this issue. It's also an issue of concern—of grave concern, I would say—to the agriculture community. I'm pleased by the response from the Premier. This legislation is important to beekeepers, especially during this period of uncertainty for the sector.

As I'm sure the Premier is aware, there have been reports of high mortality rates of bees across the globe, and many beekeepers in Ontario attribute the deaths to the planting of treated corn seed. Can the Premier please inform the House what is being done to help beekeepers who are losing their hives?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very aware of the high number of bee deaths in Ontario and, along with beekeepers, I'm really concerned about what this means for the agriculture sector as a whole, not to mention the ecosystem. The Pest Management Regulatory Agency, alongside with the Ministry of the Environment, is investigating the bee kills. The Pest Management Regulatory Agency has released a best-practices document developed in consultation with the industry, and it demonstrates ways of reducing potential risk to bees. Ministry staff will continue to work with the industry, with colleagues at the Ministry of the Environment and with the Pest Management Regulatory Agency this spring to monitor Ontario hive health.

The Ontario government recognizes the vitally important role that pollinators and beekeepers play in maintaining a healthy and productive agri-food sector. I know that the members opposite are equally concerned about this issue.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question today is for the Premier. Premier, the former Minister of Finance reported on July 16, 2012, that the true cost to cancel the Mississauga gas plant would come in at \$190 million. Well, we had to wait for the Auditor General to tell us the actual true cost, which is actually \$275 million—unacceptable. Since your math seems to be off these days, I'm going to break that down for you. What we are

talking about is seat-savers, and it's \$69 million per Liberal member whose seat was saved by the Mississauga gas plant cancellation, all on the backs of taxpayers.

Minister, now that we know the true cost of the four Liberal seats in Mississauga, why don't you just reveal the true cost of the Oakville cancellation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When the three parties made election promises to relocate the energy facility in Mississauga, none of us knew what the costs would be. This government accepts the Auditor General's report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the answers that you and your ministers have provided are pathetic. They are disingenuous and disrespectful to the people of Ontario. The AG's report clearly shows you squandered millions of taxpayer dollars to save Liberal seats in the last election—a billion dollars that could have built new hospitals, provided health care to seniors and kept schools open. I suggest you have known all along the cost implications of your decision to cancel the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants.

Premier, this is about integrity—the integrity of your government and your personal integrity. Will you show integrity now and show us the real facts and cancellation costs of the Oakville gas plant?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When all three parties made election promises to relocate the gas plants, they did not know what the costs were. They knew that there would be costs. The Auditor General has spent—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, withdraw.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton is not helping either.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Auditor General has spent over half a year working with the Ontario Power Authority to calculate the costs, having access to all the documents and all the information. The government has accepted the Auditor General's report.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the finance minister. Over a month ago, we raised concerns in the House regarding the dire situation that municipalities are facing due to MPAC and Assessment Review Board decisions. Several months ago, the Assessment Review Board ruled that the town of Espanola must pay \$4 million following a property reassessment of its Espanola

mill. Months ago, the Minister of Finance said they were aware of the situation and were looking into a solution.

Residents of Espanola live every day in fear that their taxes will increase substantially. Municipalities rely on MPAC assessments to collect local taxes. When the Assessment Review Board decision comes out of left field, the municipalities are left holding the bag.

The government has had much time to think about this issue. Will this government commit to finding actual solutions in a timely fashion before municipalities are forced to put the unfair tax burden on the backs of hard-working Ontarians?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It is indeed a concern that is shared by the people of Espanola and, frankly, by our government as well. That's why we've asked MPAC to do a review of the ARB decisions. It is under way, and we look forward to seeing their decision so that we can facilitate the needs of the community while at the same time maintaining competitiveness in our province. So I do appreciate your question. We are reviewing it, and we will get back to you shortly.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: I wish to correct my record from question period today. Today I said that the NDP member from Mississauga said we wouldn't build it. I meant, of course, the member from Toronto-Danforth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, you can help me out on this. Are we allowed to give notice of dissatisfaction with a question?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No.

DEFERRED VOTES

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Will the members take their seats, please. Before the Sergeant-at-Arms comes, will the members take their seats, please.

Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 11. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Fife, Catherine	Milloy, John
Balkisson, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Forster, Cindy	Murray, Glen R.
Barardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Horwath, Andrea	Piruzza, Teresa
Campbell, Sarah	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Craitlor, Kim	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Taylor, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Vanthof, John
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
DiNovo, Cheri	Meilleure, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	McDonnell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff
Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 32.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Minister of Health and Long-Term Care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'd ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

There are no further votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BOSTON TRAGEDY

Mr. Todd Smith: In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul tells us that "suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope." On days like today, it seems like hope is all we're left with. We cannot, nor should we try to explain the evil that exists in our world. We're left only to endure it, with the promise that we will come out a stronger, more hopeful, more determined people.

Yesterday, in the middle of a serene Boston afternoon that saw the Red Sox win a thrilling walk-off against Tampa Bay at Fenway Park—just moments later and a few miles away, tragedy hit one of the seminal sporting events in the American lexicon.

My friend Cassandra Bonn was one of 2,000 Canadians who were participating in the Boston Marathon. Moments earlier, she had crossed the finish line. As she celebrated a lifetime accomplishment with her husband, Kris, two explosions tore through downtown Boston. Thankfully, they weren't injured and survived that terrible event.

This senseless act of violence did claim three lives, including that of an eight-year-old boy.

It's in these moments that our society begins to believe in heroes again. As smoke and shrapnel rained down on Boston yesterday, first responders were joined by runners and spectators so committed to helping the victims that they ran toward the explosion. That's how you identify the heroes: They're the ones running into the explosion.

In the face of such brutality, we all suffer. In the wake of such violence, we must all endure, because we only defeat the darkness if we're able to hand hope to the classmates of that eight-year-old boy.

Pray for Boston today.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Jonah Schein: Recently, I met with constituents of Davenport from the Dupont/Lansdowne area. They're paying the price for a gaping loophole in our tenant protection laws. I want to thank them for taking the time to share their stories with me.

These are residents who are living in buildings that were not residential prior to 1991, and as such, they're not covered by the rent increase guidelines in the Residential Tenancies Act. This means that they and hundreds of other residents in Davenport who are living in newer buildings and factory conversions are not protected by rent control laws. Residents are seeing their rents raised arbitrarily, and in some cases by arbitrarily large sums. Some landlords seem to be using this as a way to force out tenants who request simple maintenance repairs.

This loophole affects most deeply those living on the edge and those living in poverty in our community. Fixing this simple loophole in the law would help strengthen

protection for tenants and help keep housing a bit more affordable for thousands of Ontarians. This government should take immediate action to close this loophole and start taking further action to protect Ontarians from poverty.

I hope that this government will introduce a budget soon that will begin to address the needs of people living in poverty. We need to see investments made in our child care, in our social assistance and affordable housing programs, and we need this government to raise the minimum wage.

Speaker, the decisions made in this building determine whether the most vulnerable residents can survive and prosper in Ontario or if they will fall deeper into poverty, and we need to take this responsibility seriously.

ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Today we mark Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israeli Independence Day. This is the national day of Israel, commemorating the Israeli declaration of independence in 1948. On this day, the Jewish leadership, led by future Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, declared Israel an independent state eight hours before the end of the British mandate for Palestine. Today is a day to commemorate the Jewish people's realization of self-determination.

At noon today, we had an official flag-raising ceremony here at Queen's Park, honouring Israel's 65th independence day.

I might add that it is also an opportunity to support ongoing efforts at the international level to bring a just and lasting peace to this region of the world.

Over the past 65 years, the bonds between Ontario and Israel have become established and are strengthened through our shared values of freedom and human rights. Today is not only a day to celebrate Israeli independence, but it is also a day to celebrate the many successes Israel has enjoyed, including Israel's strength, vibrancy and commitment to democracy.

In Israel today, families will celebrate with picnics and barbecues. Balconies and cars are decorated with Israeli flags. Here in Canada, many Jewish communities, organizations and activity groups hold celebratory events to commemorate the day.

Ontario's Jewish community has made a tremendous contribution to our economic, social and cultural life. I call on all Ontarians to join me in wishing the nation of Israel peace and prosperity in the year ahead.

RONALD JOHN EDWARDS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: This past weekend, the people of Burlington gathered to offer their final respects to Ronald John Edwards, who passed away peacefully on April 2 at the age of 85 after a lifetime of community service.

Ron was the first executive director of the Burlington YMCA and was best known to the residents of my riding

as Mr. Y. He wore that nickname as a badge of honour, and it literally followed him everywhere, as it was also his custom licence plate.

In 2004, the Burlington Y was renamed the Ron Edwards Family YMCA, which is fitting since he lived the values that define the organization: caring, honesty, respect, responsibility and inclusiveness. He championed the Y as a place that all people could enjoy, regardless of financial means.

He was a community builder, and he was generous with his time and energy. Ron was an active Rotarian and recipient of the Paul Harris Fellow award, as well as a member of the Appleby United Church and the Burlington Curling Club.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I would like to extend condolences to his wife, Esther, his children, grandchildren, family, friends and loved ones on the passing of this wonderful, wonderful man.

EQUAL VOICE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to rise today because Equal Voice is in the House, and they're having a reception here. They're an amazing organization.

I want to tell you that Girls Government was here yesterday. This is an initiative that Equal Voice supports and members around the House have actually put into place in their ridings. Yesterday, we had some incredible young girls—13 years old—who came and met with two women in power, one of them being the Premier. They brought forward their issues, and they were able to speak directly to women in power.

But they walked past two floors where the walls were covered with portraits of men. That is simply the reality of the history of this and other places of power in our nation. We have to change that.

I'm very proud that in the New Democratic Party we have over 40% women in our caucus, both here and federally. We're excited about that, but that's just the beginning. We need to be over 50%. That is the goal, and that's the goal of Equal Voice.

To ensure that goal, we need to get that message out to our daughters, to our granddaughters, so that the world that they grow up in is a world where the portraits on the walls are equal numbers of men and women. That's what we aim for and that's what Equal Voice aims for in a world where women in Ontario still make only 72 cents for every dollar men make. We're going to change that with Equal Voice's help. Please come out and give them your support this afternoon.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I also rise today to speak in support of Equal Voice, which is going to be hosting a reception later on today. As we all know, our government is committed to encouraging more women to engage in the political system and to seek public office. Although great strides have been made in the advancement of

gender issues in the province, there is still a lot of work to be done in empowerment and advocacy.

Just last week, Ontario observed pay equity day, raising awareness about gender differences in salaries in our province. As part of our action on women's issues, the Ontario government has undertaken a series of programs and action plans pertaining to issues like domestic violence, sexual violence, aboriginal healing and wellness, poverty reduction and long-term affordable housing.

Additionally, this year 66 women and girls are being honoured with Leading Women, Building Communities and Leading Girls, Building Communities recognition certificates for their contributions to improving the lives of others in their communities. Through programs like these, the Ontario government is proud to celebrate and advocate for the women of this great province.

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Today, we take note of the fact that although women in Canada compose over 50% of the population, only 25% of the elected officials in our country are women. While that number has improved in recent years, there's always more to be done. Led by this province's first female Premier, Kathleen Wynne, with the support of Deputy Premier Deb Matthews, our government is proud of the fact that one third of cabinet is composed of women.

DON BUMSTEAD

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to pay respect to a long-time Meaford resident of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Don Bumstead passed away in his home on Sunday, March 17 at the age of 92.

As a true industry and community leader, Don was one of Meaford's most recognized residents. He was involved in the Meaford Rotary Club, serving as the president on multiple occasions. He was also instrumental in founding the Meaford Hospital Foundation, raising millions of dollars for the local hospital.

Don also served on township council and volunteered on boards and associations across the province. He was, in fact, featured on the cover of Time magazine for his business success—a pretty impressive feat for a farm boy from Meaford.

At a very young age, Don started custom threshing and later started a farm machinery business in Meaford, and after that moved on as founding owner and operator of the Meaford Ford dealership.

Don was always there to help anyone in need. He was a renowned fundraiser in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, receiving the prestigious Whipper "Billy" Watson award for his many years as the top pledge-earner at the Snowarama/Skiarama Easter Seals fundraiser, organized by his good friend the late Tom Norris. In November 2002, Don was awarded a Queen's Jubilee Medal for his outstanding contributions to his country.

Don was married to his wife, Edith, who passed away in May 2012, for 67 years. They had three children—David, Tom and Donna—and many grandchildren and

great-grandchildren. Family was always Don's top priority.

I would like the House to join me in paying respect to Don Bumstead for his great dedication, leadership, hard work and generosity towards his community of Meaford. We will miss you, Don, but you will never be forgotten.

FATHER SERRA SEPARATE SCHOOL

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I rise today to tell you a story about a little school called Father Serra. Every year, under the guidance of their principal, Joe Pannozzo, the school holds a dance-a-thon. For nine years, they've been holding this dance-a-thon in memory of a little boy named Ian Macdonald, who passed away from leukemia. They've raised up to \$112,000 over those nine years. They engage the entire school. They have a wonderful time.

The little girl who came—she's about four years old—she's a survivor, and she brought her piggy bank so that she could add her pennies to that \$112,000. It speaks to the kind of caring that goes on in our schools, the respect that our teachers teach the children on how to care for others, and that they're very much a part of the community that they live in.

They go quietly about this every year, they don't make a great big spiel about it, and yet they have an incredible impact on a lot of people in their community and on a lot of children who now are survivors because of their support and their input.

It's just a way to say thank you to the children, to the parents, to the volunteers, to the teacher administration of a little school tucked away in Etobicoke that is making an extraordinary difference for children with leukemia and lymphoma.

RALPH KLEIN

Mr. Ted Arnott: I rise this afternoon as our caucus critic to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to honour former Alberta Premier Ralph Klein.

As members will know, Ralph Klein passed away late last month. He was a true political icon in Alberta. He served as Premier of Alberta from 1992 to 2006 and led the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party to four consecutive majority governments.

Ralph Klein also had a strong working relationship with former Ontario Premier Mike Harris, and the two Premiers shared a common political philosophy.

In his own way, Ralph Klein had an unvarnished eloquence that was unique and that endeared him to Albertans and Canadians. He had the common touch. He was able to connect with ordinary Albertans and reach out to them in a way that few politicians can match.

Perhaps his greatest legacy to his province will be seen to be his unwavering commitment to fiscal responsibility. When he became Premier, he attacked Alberta's debt and deficit with a vigour and passion that were unrivaled across the country. He recognized that it was

important not only to eliminate the deficit but also pay down the debt, a vision that I have raised in this House many times. His efforts were rewarded when in 2005, under his leadership, Alberta became the only Canadian province to become entirely debt-free.

Ralph Klein achieved a stature such that, across the country, if you thought of Alberta, you immediately thought of Ralph Klein and you smiled. I know that all members would want to join me and extend our sincere condolences to Albertans and to the Klein family.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated April 16, 2013, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES PRIS EN CHARGE

Ms. Wong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day / Projet de loi 53, Loi proclamant le Jour des enfants et des jeunes pris en charge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Ms. Soo Wong: By proclaiming May 14 in each year Children and Youth in Care Day, the province of Ontario recognizes the enormous contribution that current and former crown and society wards make to the province, as well as the strength, bravery and resilience shown by these children and youth in the face of adversity.

Mr. Speaker, Children and Youth in Care Day is an important opportunity to raise awareness about children and youth under the care of this province and to recommit to supporting them and helping them reach their full potential.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Jim Wilson: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just to clarify the speaking order on the Local Food Act this afternoon. I seek unanimous consent that the official opposition lead speech by Mr. Hardeman on Bill 36, the Local Food Act, be stood down, and that the speaking rotation pass to the third party for their leadoff remarks at that time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Wilson is looking for unanimous consent to stand down the leadoff for the Progressive Conservatives and transfer that to the NDP. Do I hear a yes in agreement? Agreed? Agreed. Thank you.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm glad that I finally got this spot away from the member for Durham. I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Addison.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: I rise today on behalf of constituents in Algoma–Manitoulin from Spring Bay, Gore

Bay, Providence Bay, Evansville, Mindemoya, and across Manitoulin Island.

1520

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas, regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition and will present it to page Jack to bring to the Clerks' table.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the NDP member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton has put forward a plan for auto insurance that would dramatically drive up rates for drivers throughout northern Ontario. According to one estimate, drivers in northwestern Ontario could expect to pay 38.8% more in insurance premiums if the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton's proposal is adopted;

"Whereas Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada has said, 'In essence, the bill would force responsible drivers to subsidize the insurance premiums of dangerous drivers';

"Whereas the leader of the third party and the other NDP members of the Legislature have made it clear that they continue to support the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton's proposal for auto insurance reform;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To make it clear that the Legislature does not support the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton's proposal to change auto insurance in Ontario."

I support this petition, and I will give it to Kamryn for presentation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):—have to tell you to stop heckling during petitions.

The member from Simcoe–Grey.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Everybody says everything they want in a petition.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to argue, and I'm sure you're not going to start the argument—I'll finish it.

SPRINGWATER PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we oppose the termination of the operating budget for Springwater Provincial Park in Springwater township on March 31, 2013;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the park remain operating and facilities such as the animal sanctuary, cabins/shelters, playground equipment and ground maintenance remain intact and operating."

I agree with this petition and I have signed it.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I agree with this. I'll sign my name to it and give it to page Callum.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that's entitled "Good Things Grow in Ontario.

"Whereas the agri-food industry is now, and has historically been, one of the primary economic drivers in Ontario; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario support local processors and producers in Ontario through purchasing and consuming locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables, meat and processed food products; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario farmers and Ontario food producers by leading by example; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario celebrates local Ontario producers and processors and promotes the good things grown, harvested and made in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 36, the Local Food Act."

I support this petition, will sign it and hand it to Jack.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas the percentage of vehicles that failed emission testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is in fact less reliable and prone to error; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to phase out the Drive Clean program."

I support this petition, and I'm pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Bonnie.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

On behalf of the over a thousand dogs that have been killed—and the families who love them—just because of the way they look, I'm going to sign this, and I'm going to give it to Glory to be delivered to the table.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough–Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough–Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough–Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

"Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough–Agincourt riding; and

"Whereas the commission's report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough–Agincourt community; and

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough–Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough–Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401."

I fully support this petition, and I give it to page Madelyn.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment takes immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I concur with this—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Parkdale–High Park.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by up to 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I agree, of course, and give it to Jack to be delivered to the table.

1530

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the agri-food industry is now, and has historically been, one of the primary economic drivers in Ontario; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario support local processors and producers in Ontario through purchasing and consuming locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables, meat and processed food products; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario farmers and Ontario food producers by leading by example; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario celebrates local Ontario producers and processors and promotes the good things grown, harvested and made in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 36, the Local Food Act."

I fully support this, Madam Speaker, and give it to Rosalin.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: I have a very important petition here from residents of Prince Edward county in my riding:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents and municipalities across Ontario want the ability to veto and/or plan for industrial wind turbines in their community; and

"Whereas ratepayers in Ontario want all forms of energy generation to be affordable and reliable; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want the feed-in tariff program to be eliminated; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine from the development of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's bill, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and call committee hearings immediately on the bill," which will be debated this Thursday.

I support this and will pass it to the table with Stacey.

WIND TURBINES

Mrs. Jane McKenna: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents and municipalities across Ontario want the ability to veto and/or plan for industrial wind turbines in their community; and

"Whereas ratepayers in Ontario want all forms of energy generation to be affordable and reliable; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want the feed-in tariff program to be eliminated; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine from the development of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's bill, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and call committee hearings immediately on the bill."

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I'm going to sign my name to this—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I continue to get petitions in from farm dealerships titled Stop the Tire Tax Hikes.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for farm and construction tires;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas Ontario's opposition has proposed a plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Suspend the hikes to Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on farm and off-the-road tires pending proposals to lower costs."

I support these signatures and sign my own.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time for petitions has ended.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR

LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 9, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand here and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming—Cochrane, but today, to do the lead on An Act to enact the Local Food Act on their behalf is a special honour for me today. A lot of the people in Timiskaming—Cochrane are farmers or they're the descendants of farmers. I've been a farmer my whole life and I'm going to focus today, in our lead, on how the Local Food Act relates to the agricultural sector. Some of my more urban members, when they speak on this, are going to focus on what the Local Food Act means to urban influences. I think that's how we're going to handle this today.

I would first like to take this opportunity to recognize the person who basically got me involved and is actually the reason for me standing here today.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Ernie.

Mr. John Vanthof: And no, it's not my uncle Ernie, the member for Oxford. He's the reason that I'm NDP.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes?

Mr. Steve Clark: I just think, since we do have a family connection, that he really should leave the good member for Oxford out of the conversation. We all know the member for Oxford's influence on that member.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I go back to the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane. Continue.

Mr. John Vanthof: Actually, I have a very good relationship with my uncle, the honourable member from Oxford. We get along on a lot of issues; we don't get along on political issues.

But the person who was really responsible for my entrance into politics is—well, I'll tell you the story.

Ms. Laurie Scott: You've got an hour.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's right, I've got an hour. I've never had to speak for an hour before in this House, and I'm going to take full advantage of it. So, 25 years ago, my wife and I had just bought a dairy farm—a small one; it was a bit rundown—and we were struggling. We had lots of big dreams but no equity. Anyone who has run a business knows that big dreams and little equity don't go together very well.

I was solely focused on trying to make our little farm run. One morning, someone came into my barn and asked me to attend a meeting of the Temiskaming Milk Producers' Association. His name was Albert Gauthier. I knew Albert by reputation. People from the city might not understand this, but I knew him from crop tours, because he ran a farm that I would drive by once in a while just to see how it was really done. He had the kind of farm where everything was perfect, and his cows gave the most milk in the district.

He showed up at my barn, and he talked to me for half an hour about why I should go to this meeting. At the time, I had no patience for meetings and, quite frankly, no interest.

Mr. Grant Crack: Quite a change from now.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. It's scary, actually. The only reason that I went to the annual meeting of the Temiskaming milk producers is because Albert Gauthier came to my barn and asked me. My wife and I went to that meeting and before I knew it, somehow Albert had me nominated to some kind of subcommittee. And 27 years later, I'm standing here.

Albert and I didn't always agree, and we fought lots of issues beside each other. Sometimes he laughed at my decisions. I'm pretty sure he voted for me, but I'm sure it was tough because NDP wasn't the Gauthier family's natural choice. He made a big commitment. I think it's really important that I recognize someone like Albert Gauthier and his wife, Jeanne d'Arc, not only for what they did for our community but what they did for my

family. There were lots of times when I needed someone's advice, and he was the man I turned to, so I would really like to thank him.

Many in this House are familiar with the slogan "Farmers Feed Cities." Now it seems that people in places of power have come to realize how crucial a role the agri-food sector plays in our province. It's about time. The agri-food sector employs over 700,000 people in Ontario and adds over \$34 billion to the provincial economy. If you think about it, it's the cornerstone of the provincial economy, providing employment throughout the province. It's not only the cornerstone; it's the largest economic driver in the province. Through the recent recession, it was the only sector that actually grew and continued to grow.

1540

But everyone has a different perspective of the food we eat. From the producer, the processor, the retailer, restaurant owner, the family with the means to purchase only organic or who can focus on local, to the mom who can't even scrape by for her kids by clipping coupons, food is a necessity for all, but not equally accessible to all.

Often, people who grow food for a living tend to be not less passionate, because farmers are certainly passionate about growing food, but we're more practical because our living depends on how our crops yield, what they are worth or how much milk is in the bulk tank. Many of today's farms are large, so the income of several families depends on the fate of that farm.

By the same token, someone of very limited income is probably less concerned where the food comes from than how much it costs, whether or not they can feed that family. For people being squeezed by the cost of everyday living, a rise in the cost of food can mean forgoing something else, and that's something—we are all in favour, Speaker, of promoting local food. But we all have to realize that for some in this province, for many in this province, the option of looking for local food isn't there. Their option is just making sure that they have enough money to buy food, and that's a big difference.

This afternoon, the reintroduced Local Food Act allows us the opportunity to add the views of the New Democratic Party to the debate on the bill and how it could impact the agricultural sector. That's where I'm going to focus. I'm a farmer and the only farmer in our caucus. I don't know how many other farmers there are, but that's where I'm going to focus.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: We have a farmer in the other caucus.

For those watching at home, I would like to give a brief history of this proposed legislation, just a bit of a recap of how it was enacted.

The reintroduced Local Food Act started out, as far as I can tell, as a Liberal campaign promise in the last election. They were suffering from some—how should I say it?—lack of connection in the rural community. You

know what? A discussion about local food might have helped their chances. I think that's where it started.

It was a good idea, because I'm not sure if local food really had caught on as much in the rural parts of the province as it had in the urban part. People in urban Ontario are really wanting to reconnect with where their food comes from, and for a lot of reasons. Local food tastes better. It just does. That's not a big argument that we have to make.

It's more available than it used to be; farmers' markets, there's a lot of places. People were already clueing in, as were farmers' markets, restaurants and even major retailers. They're starting to focus in a lot more—you'll find a lot more local food in major retail outlets, and that's because people are demanding it. If you run a business, especially a retail business, you are going to supply what people demand.

People are demanding local food, and that's a good thing. That's a great thing, actually. That's a great thing for consumers, a great thing for everybody in the chain and a fantastic thing for farmers in Ontario. That's why we can create altogether 700,000 jobs. That's a great thing.

There's one other thing that was driving the Local Food Act. It's the last I'm going to mention, but it was certainly not the least. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, had already introduced a local food bill. That bill, its focus was to set a target for local food purchases by government agencies. It was fairly straightforward. It would set targets, and those targets would provide, basically, a solid customer base for those food producers. It would also provide a really good example to private enterprise. Some of the aspects of that bill—some, you can still search for them—if you really look hard, you can still find them. But there are a lot of differences in what has been proposed here and what our bill was.

But let's go back to our history. After the election, the next time we heard about the Local Food Act was at the International Plowing Match in Ayr, where it was re-announced—

Mr. Steve Clark: To great fanfare.

Mr. John Vanthof: Great fanfare. Everybody was onstage. You know what? Who wouldn't want to talk about local food? It is a great issue to talk about. There's no greater issue for a press release than talking about local food.

Hon. Jeff Leal: You bet.

Mr. John Vanthof: Right? A great press release.

Then it was introduced into the Legislature by the then Minister of Agriculture. But after the technical briefings, we started to run into a bit of—how do I describe it? We were both underwhelmed and very concerned at the same time. The wording in the act—a little while from now in my hour, I'm going to discuss the wording in the reintroduced act—but the wording in the first act was very vague. We say this about a lot of Liberal bills, but this one—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Plan to make a plan.

Mr. John Vanthof: That wasn't even—it was a plan to talk about making a plan. It wasn't even about making a plan.

But where we had our problem is, you shouldn't really have to make a law to talk about making a plan. It contained no set goals or objectives; objectives and goals would be set by the ministry after the act was proclaimed into law. That was a problem for us. There would be consultation, but exactly who would be consulted with wasn't specified. There was, in the original act, in some of the supporting documents, some indication of how the consultation was to take place. Specifically, there was going to be a minister's forum. It also had some directions which the act was going to take: There was going to be support for direct farm marketing and farm markets—good things. It was very vague.

Once again, it was great for press releases. The Local Food Act has got no ending for great press releases. But in the end, there wasn't much meat on the bones.

Actually, there was only one action item, and that was the creation of a Celebrate Local Food Week. Even there—

Hon. Jeff Leal: You can't criticize that.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, but I can criticize that. Yes, Celebrate Local Food Week is a great idea. I would celebrate Local Food Week. It's a week to celebrate the quality, the taste and the availability of local food. As we all know, and as the minister tried to sing it last time he introduced it, good things grow in Ontario. Once again, great—

Mr. Steve Clark: Sing it.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Sing it.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, I'm not going to attempt that.

But Celebrate Local Food Week was the last week of May. I'm a farmer, and there's a few things that farmers know instinctively. There is a time to plant, there is a time to harvest, and there is a time to celebrate the harvest. And May is not that time.

Interjection: Asparagus maybe.

Mr. John Vanthof: Unless you want to eat asparagus or seeds, it was not—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What do you have against asparagus?

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Mr. John Vanthof: Nothing against asparagus.

You'd think you would want to hold the Celebrate Local Food Week at a time when there were multitudes of Ontario foods to eat—and we'll get to that.

Vague as it was, we were looking forward, as I am today—I was really looking forward to this debate because it would give us a chance to talk about agriculture in this Legislature. I think all parties would agree that we don't talk about agriculture enough in this Legislature, and I'm sure if you looked in Hansard from many years gone by, it used to be much more prominent. I'm told that the legislative calendar even used to revolve around agriculture. So it would give us time to talk about agriculture.

As I was preparing for the debate—a funny thing happened on the way to the debate. Do you know what happened? The government was prorogued. I can remember: I was sitting with the minister, talking about the Local Food Act, and he told me, “I have to go upstairs for a meeting.” That was the very night that the government was prorogued. Imagine my surprise—and I was surprised. I’m not going to go into a long discussion of why the government was prorogued. The Liberals used that time, a bit self-servingly, to pick a new leader. I don’t think they prorogued to improve the Local Food Act—maybe, because agriculture is pretty important; but I don’t think they did that.

The prominence of the Local Food Act continued to increase, because during the Liberal leadership campaign—and I’m sure everyone in the House will recall this—one of the candidates stated that if she won, she was going to take the portfolio of the Minister of Agriculture and Food. In the rural concessions, that didn’t really create too much of a buzz.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: It didn’t create a negative buzz either. But it wasn’t a real big press release. You know how we measure everything on that side with press releases? It wasn’t a real big press release.

Speaker, as we all know, that candidate is now the Premier, and she did fulfill her promise to become the Minister of Agriculture—

Interjection: And Food.

Mr. John Vanthof: —and Food.

When she did take the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, that did create waves along the back roads. It raised awareness and it raised concerns along the back roads. OMAF, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, is an incredibly diverse ministry. There are 200 commodities, plus all the people who process the food. It’s a big, big deal. It’s definitely a full-time job, and more. So people were concerned that if you’re Premier and the minister, you might not have the time to fully grasp the agriculture portfolio. They had real concerns with that. At local commodity meetings, the discussion at the lunch break often still reverts to that issue. Some people think, “Well, she became the minister because she has got some really good ideas.” Or some people say, “Oh, there are some really bad things coming.” You know what? The jury is still out on that.

There are those in this House who have brought up over and over again in their say-no-to-everything campaign that it’ll never work. We have a different take. We firmly believe, in the New Democratic Party, that being Minister of Agriculture and Food is a full-time job. There is no question about that—a full-time job, and more. But if the Premier specifically wants to take on the Ministry of Agriculture—

Mr. Michael Mantha: And Food.

Mr. John Vanthof: —and Food. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin continues to support me by mentioning—because most times, when farmers talk about

the Minister of Agriculture, they don’t always tack on “and Food.”

We believe that if the Premier really wants to take that job, there is no one better to take a couple of issues and move them down the field because there’s always—before I got this job, I actually lobbied here once in a while. I used to be on the board of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario; I’m going to talk a little bit about them a little bit later. Lots of times, we’d get to hear, “Oh, we would love to help you, if we could just get the Premier’s office inside.” Well, now we have got the Premier’s office inside because she’s the Minister of Agriculture—

Mr. Michael Mantha: And Food.

Mr. John Vanthof: —and Food. Thank you.

Interjection: Don’t forget the—

Mr. John Vanthof: Eventually, I will get this right.

But when that concerns the Local Food Act, it also puts more emphasis on what the Local Food Act actually contains, because for many, how seriously the Premier, or the Minister of Agriculture—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: —and Food, takes the Local Food Act is going to be a bellwether or a barometer of how seriously the Premier and her government are going to take the agriculture sector, the 700,000 jobs. I know all 700,000 jobs don’t depend on local food; we all know that. But it’s a bellwether, so it’s put a lot more focus, rightfully so.

One of the things the Premier said—one of the reasons she’s taken this portfolio is to put more focus on agriculture in the province. Great. But she has also put a lot more focus on the Local Food Act and what it actually contains. I think her reputation—someone at the OFA, from OMAF, said, “What would you like the Premier to be judged on when she’s no longer”—because she’s going to be the Minister of Agriculture and Food, I believe, for a year—she’s committed to—if the government lasts that long. To us, the Local Food Act is a barometer.

That’s the history of the act. Let’s talk about the history of food. In the not-too-distant past, all food in this province—across the world but in this province, too—used to be local. That’s why we ate corn in August, asparagus—when does asparagus come out in southern Ontario?—strawberries in July, and we ate lots of beets, canned beets, and frozen beans in the wintertime. But over the years, our economy became more industrialized, and transportation and food preservation became quicker and relatively cheaper. Rural people moved off the farm, and the supermarket was born. We eat strawberries in February, but they’re not from our country, and they don’t really taste the same.

People have rediscovered their connection to local food and the people who grow it. As I said before, that’s a good thing for farmers, processors—everyone. There are fine examples of local food across this province. When I was listening to the Liberal lead—the member from Prescott mentioned some in his riding. The Premier mentioned some. I’m sure my colleague from Algoma—

Manitoulin, when he does his few minutes on this, is going to talk about some of the great food available. Hawberry Farms—there is some great stuff in Algoma-Manitoulin, as there is in Timiskaming-Cochrane.

For those who have never been to Timiskaming-Cochrane, and for all of those who think that there's nothing in northern Ontario but rocks and trees and lakes, you would be sadly mistaken. A lot of the people in this House, the first time—for a lot of them—that they came to Timiskaming-Cochrane was the 2009 International Plowing Match. A lot of them will tell you, when you come over that hill after three hours of Canadian Shield and there's 400,000 acres of farmland—200,000 in Quebec and 200,000 in Ontario—it's quite a sight. That's the Little Clay Belt.

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Not only does my riding contain the Little Clay Belt, but it contains the Greater Clay Belt. That starts about another hour north, and that's one million acres. Ours is 400,000; that one's one million acres. It's got more potential for agricultural development than anywhere else in this province. The only thing that's holding that area back—it's not the land. Why that area didn't develop like Timiskaming, like the Little Clay Belt, is because there are more mines and mills in that area. So every time farming was tough, it was easier to make money in a mine or a mill. That's why that land wasn't developed the same way ours was, because we don't have any really close mines or mills.

The proof of that is some of the most modern farms—and in my colleague Gilles Bisson's riding, Timmins-James Bay, they just had an opening for a dairy farm, the Haasen family, a two-robot dairy farm.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The Haasens.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, the Haasens. It's probably, as we speak, if not the most modern, definitely one of the most modern farms in Ontario. They are good farmers, and their farm is an example. There are other farms in that area, examples of what can be done in our part of the province.

So we know what we're talking about local food. Not only can we do the production thing, but we also have local food processing, we have farmers' markets, small abattoirs. The one I'd like to spend a little bit of time on, since I have—I only have half an hour now. It's going pretty well.

But one that deserves a few minutes is Thornloe Cheese. Thornloe Cheese was a small cheese factory. It was bought up by a bigger company; once again, bought up by a bigger company. Seven years ago, Parmalat Canada announced that they were going to close Thornloe Cheese and take the quota somewhere else. The local farmers, we got together and, with the help of the community—it was a big effort; we had to move a few mountains. It was the first time in Canadian dairy processing history that a major dairy processor backed down and sold production quota to a small community-owned company. The people who ran Thornloe Cheese had some big hurdles. I'd like to thank a group who stepped in and who

now are the proud owners of Thornloe Cheese, and that's EastGen. It's a co-operative owned by farmers throughout the province.

Thornloe Cheese, after some really rough times, is now available in a lot of places; not just in Timiskaming-Cochrane, but across the province. If you go to the Royal York, down the street, you can get Thornloe Cheese. Many specialty shops and some bigger stores carry Thornloe Cheese.

If you see a Thornloe Cheese stand, I advise you to buy some Devil's Rock blue. It's in a little package; it looks like a little mountain. All Thornloe Cheese is named after places in Timiskaming-Cochrane. On Lake Timiskaming, there's a huge outcrop where you can look over—it's 600 feet up. It's beautiful; it's called Devil's Rock. That cheese is named after Devil's Rock. It is fantastic stuff.

So, in her lead, the Minister of Agriculture and Food stated that she felt, on the local food issue, that the public was probably ahead of the government. I'd say we would agree with that. The public is far ahead of the government on local food.

The real question that we have regarding this legislation is whether the Minister of Agriculture and Food is truly serious about protecting and improving access to local food, or whether the "new" Liberal government—that's the term they like to use—is just trying to get ahead of the local food parade and take credit for the work of others. That's the question, and that's what we're going to discuss about this.

I'd like to take a few minutes and talk about some other legislation that actually does protect local food, and one of those pieces of legislation is federal, but it's worth talking about. The CFIA regulates food packaging sizes in Canada. They won't be doing that very much longer if the Conservative cousins from our people to the right here have their way, because they want to stop that. They want to stop regulation of everything, to our right. I'm not wild about regulation on everything, but there are times when regulation is a good thing. So because we have regulated package sizing in this country, usually it's packaged in Canada and it uses Canadian products to fill those packages.

Heinz in Leamington is a good example. You know what? Heinz is threatened because of CFIA, because the Conservatives are cutting regulated package sizing. And it's not just Heinz. There are a lot of things that are threatened because of the lack of regulated package sizing, because when you regulate package sizing, you have the ability to regulate what goes in those packages. You have the ability to regulate the food, how the food is produced. You have a lot more control.

So will the Local Food Act have anything to do with this issue? No. Let's be upfront. The Local Food Act and the CFIA are two different things, okay? But there is a connection, not with the Local Food Act but with the Premier, because who better? This is one of those, when you want to move a ball down the field, the Minister of Agriculture and Food is the Premier.

Mr. Michael Mantha: The quarterback.

Mr. John Vanthof: She's the quarterback—and not just the quarterback; she's the owner of the team. So who better to go to the federal government and try and change their minds, and if you can't change their minds, try and come up with some plan to save thousands of jobs in Leamington, in Tecumseh, with the farmers? We talk here about the Local Food Act as a conception. That's local food that we're going to lose unless somebody steps up to the plate. There's one for the Minister of Agriculture and Food to take.

But we've got another issue that's not federal, it's provincial, so it's right up our alley, and it was passed in this Legislature almost 50 years ago. A lot of people probably don't know that. A lot of people know about supply management. That's how our dairy products and our poultry and eggs are regulated in this country. Everyone thinks that's controlled federally, and a big part of supply management is controlled federally because of tariff barriers, but one of the benefits to supply management is that there are dairy—and I'm going to focus on Ontario, right? There are dairy farms all across this province, from Cornwall to Rainy River, from Essex to Hearst—

Hon. Liz Sandals: The Haasens.

Mr. John Vanthof: Even farther north than the Haasens there's a dairy, and that's because of supply management. That's because they're guaranteed a fair price, and because they are regulated and because they work together, they also pool their transportation costs. It's actually an incredible system. They've had to fight, and we've had to fight, ever since it was implemented. It's always a fight, and part of that fight is federal, but there is a big part that's provincial, and a lot of people don't realize that.

How raw milk is protected from outside imports: That's federal. How a consumer's milk is protected: It's protected under the Milk Act, and that's provincial. So in Ontario, milk is milk. If it says "milk" on the package, it's milk. If it says "chocolate milk" on the package, because of the Milk Act and the regulations contained within, it's 90% milk and the rest is sugar and chocolate. But if it says "dairy beverage," all bets are off.

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Interjection: What is it?

Mr. John Vanthof: It can be a percentage of anything. But at least we have the definition. In Ontario, we have milk and we have dairy beverages, and that's because of the Milk Act. In some other provinces, you have something called "milk beverage." The "milk" is in big letters and the "beverage" is in little letters, so you think you're buying milk.

Thanks to the regulation in the province of Ontario—

Mr. Steve Clark: Whose regulation?

Mr. John Vanthof: That's a good regulation.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: A PC regulation.

Mr. John Vanthof: Even the PCs have a good idea once in a while. But that, folks, like the tariff protection, is always under attack because processors, especially the

big ones, can make more money with milk beverages than they can with milk. That's another issue that the Premier always has to be attentive to.

I think it's about time I actually started looking at the act itself. The reason that I talked about the first two issues—the CFIA and the Milk Act—is to kind of compare how this act stacks up to them.

I'd like to start with the explanatory note. Basically, the explanatory note is the Coles Notes of an act. You have to read farther than the explanatory note because the devil is always in the details. But if you want to get a quick view—and I'd like to read the second part. I think I'll start with the second part of the explanatory note:

The Minister of Agriculture and Food may "establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food. The minister must engage in consultation before setting the goals or targets. The minister may direct a public sector organization to provide information that would assist the minister in establishing goals or targets, understanding steps that are being taken or have been taken to meet a goal or target, or assessing progress that is being made or has been made toward meeting a goal or target."

If this outfit had written the Milk Act, we would have lost supply management years ago. There is nothing here. I'm going to go through it step by step, but that is a big problem.

I'm going to go to the purposes of the act:

"The purposes of this act are as follows:

"(1) To foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario." Sounds good.

"(2) To increase awareness of the diversity of local food in Ontario." Once again, good.

"(3) To encourage the development of new markets for local food." Good.

The big question is how. Those are all good, but how are we going to do that? That's where we get to the next part of the act.

The next part of the act is all the definitions, and that's good. The one definition we have a bit of a problem with is "local food," because it basically says if you have local food—here we go:

"(b) subject to any limitations in the regulations, food and beverages made in Ontario if they include ingredients produced or harvested in Ontario." If you're making apple pies or something like that and the cinnamon doesn't come from Ontario, is that qualified as a local food?

Interjection: Ontario apples.

Mr. John Vanthof: We have to make sure that says that somewhere, because I don't see it in the legislation.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Cinnamon; not the apple.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Cinnamon. Cinnamon doesn't come from Ontario, my friend.

But one of our biggest problems comes in section 3. Remember when I was talking about the first local food act and how Local Food Week was in May? They thought, "Wait a second; we should change that." Those people who were complaining about it being in May were

right. We should make the Local Food Week at a time when there's more local food. So what they did is they picked the week before Thanksgiving—

Mr. Grant Crack: What's wrong with that?

Mr. John Vanthof: I believe some people on the Liberal side said, "What's wrong with that?" Well, there is a little problem with that, because someone at the Ministry of Agriculture forgot to check their calendar. It's the same week as Agriculture Week, and there is a huge problem there, because to those looking in—one of the members across the way, from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell said, "What's wrong with that?" There is a big difference between celebrating local food and Agriculture Week, and I'm going to take a few minutes to explain the difference to you.

Agriculture Week is about the people who grow the food. There's a difference—a huge difference. Agriculture Week: It's about a farmer standing in the field in the spring, picking up a handful of soil and deciding whether that soil is ready to plant or not. Agriculture Week: It's about watching your crops wither in a drought, getting blasted by hail and wondering if you're going to make your payments that winter. It's about a combine pulling in and doing the outside round of your field. It's about the feeling you get when you know that that's going to be a bumper crop; that is an incredible feeling, after you've tended that crop all summer. It's about staying up all night and saving a heifer calf from your best cow. It's also about, a couple of days later, losing that cow to milk fever. It's about last Thursday when the farmers had to deal with the ice storm, and for the people who work in agriculture, their first thought was the welfare of their animals. That is Agriculture Week.

Agriculture Week is looking in the paper and seeing wedding pictures in front of tractors, either big, new John Deeres or old, restored ones. It's about weddings, births and funerals in little country churches. That is Agriculture Week.

And for the people on the other side and for the people who wrote this and for the people who can't tell the difference, I don't know if it's that they just don't care or are just too lazy to look or the whole ministry is just too much Toronto to really understand, but it is two different things. We will support this bill going to committee, but that is one thing that has got to change; otherwise, I will never vote for it.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: And to make fun of it, that it's the same, just proves that deep down, a lot of people on the other side do not understand farmers. Don't laugh. It's not the same. That one really, really bugs me.

"Goals and targets"—here we go—"(4(1) The minister may, to further the purposes of this act, establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food." Every time I read through this, "The minister may," I kept wanting to take a pencil and put in brackets "or may not." It was just a natural tendency: "The minister may or the minister may not."

Section 4(2): "Before establishing or amending a goal or target, the minister shall consult organizations that, in the minister's opinion, have an interest in the goal or target." We don't have any goals or targets specified, and you know what? The minister picks who he or she is going to pick to consult with. Who is the minister going to pick? The same people they picked to talk about the horse racing industry? Or maybe they're going to pick the same crack team that got the Local Food Week wrong twice.

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Hon. Jeff Leal: Elmer Buchanan?

Mr. John Vanthof: No, that wasn't Elmer Buchanan. That was you guys. Sorry.

Speaker, this legislation does not define who or when or how consultation is done. I'm sure stakeholders read the bill. They may mentally insert themselves into the clauses and think, "That's good. We can talk." But there's no assurance whatsoever that relevant consultation will take place on whatever issue the minister decides to consult on. Once again, this section has got to be amended so there's a clear understanding of who is going to be consulted with and when. I see big problems coming with this.

I know what they're trying to avoid. They're worried about how organic producers are going to be upset if there's somebody from Monsanto, and Monsanto is going to be upset from organic producers, so we might as well talk about this now before it becomes law, if it becomes law, as opposed to after.

Number 6: I've got to find number 6. That's almost my favourite clause in here. This wasn't in the original food act, by the way. This is an add-on, a quotation, an improvement.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Maybe.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, maybe.

"At least once every three years, the minister shall prepare a report that"—I've got to get my comma in the right place—"in respect of the reporting period,

"(a) summarizes the government's activities in respect of local food;

"(b) describes the local food goals or targets that have been established under the act...."

This is three years after the act is law. Don't you think it would make sense to describe the local food goals or targets that have been established under the act while you're approving the act?

I can just imagine me going back to people like Albert Gauthier and his son Yves, who actually is the manager of Thornloe Cheese, and he says, "How did you make your decision? What was going on with that?"

"Well, you know, I don't really know what the rules are. I don't know who will be consulted or how they will be chosen. I don't know if our region will be covered or not. But we will find out three years from now when the minister issues the local food report and accompanying press release." Come on. As a farmer, that's crazy, and as a legislator, it's even worse. How can you pass an act and then talk about how the goals that will be set will be set

three years after? And in big brackets, we have, “Trust us.” Come on, folks. That has got to be amended.

I appreciate, we appreciate that agriculture and local food is incredibly diverse. So you can’t come up with accurate targets and goals sitting here. What this act has to do is actually lay out a consultation process and who to consult with, how it’s going to be publicly held, how those decisions will be made—not for political reasons, but for policy reasons—and how they will actually work. You don’t pass a law and then talk about the objectives of that law three years after you passed it. Come on. Really? I can’t overemphasize that enough. That line is so good, I just have to read it again. I’m a bit frustrated, but—for Albert, I’m going to read it again:

« Au moins une fois tous les trois ans, le ministre prépare un rapport qui, concernant la période visée :

« ...décrit les buts ou les objectifs fixés en vertu de la Loi en ce qui concerne les aliments locaux... »

It doesn’t even make sense to me in French. How? In all seriousness, it’s nice to joke about this, but you cannot pass a law and pass the goals three years after the law.

Interjection: Who wrote that?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, who wrote that?

Furthermore, this bill completely fails to address or even mention some of the issues that are impeding Ontario’s access to local food. One of these issues—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaking of Uncle Ernie, I was so looking forward to having the member from Oxford speak before me, but it didn’t work out that way, so he’s just going to have to copy my speech now.

Furthermore, Speaker, this bill completely fails to address or even mention some of the issues that are impeding Ontario’s access to local food. What I’m going to talk about here isn’t a popular issue, but I’ve brought it up to the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture—

Mr. Michael Mantha: And Food.

Mr. John Vanthof: —and Food. It used to be Rural Affairs, but the member from Peterborough took that.

I think I brought it up to the Minister of Rural Affairs, as well, and we had a good meeting. I have a lot of respect for the Minister of Rural Affairs, but he should get somebody different to write this stuff. I talked about how some regulation is good. Well, in some cases, regulation is not so good. In some cases, especially for small processors, sometimes overregulation kills local food. I’d like to make it very clear that on this side, we are not in favour of compromising food safety in any way; no one is, I think we all agree.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: On the CFIA thing? Yes, maybe there’s one I would agree with the Liberals on—one.

In the case of small abattoirs that have to—and I’ve got a couple of them in my riding. I’ve got Creative Meats in Warren, I’ve got Rheal’s Meat Market, and I’ve got Mad Murray’s in Holtyre.

Interjection: Mad Murray?

Mr. John Vanthof: That’s what he goes by: Mad Murray. Murray has a right to be mad. Talk about

overregulation—Mad Murray had to go through an audit process on kill day. For those of you who come from the farming industry, from the agriculture industry, there are days in an abattoir when the abattoir is really busy. That is not the day that you do the routine inspection, because you’re actually hurting animal welfare. This has nothing to do with meat—you have to have a meat inspector there; that’s granted, but you could maybe schedule the routine inspections on days when you weren’t doing your job. That’s a huge issue. We’ve lost so many rural abattoirs. If you want to talk about food safety, when you overregulate something and you drive businesses like that—some people might not like what I’m about to say, but I’m a farmer, and I have the right to say it. When you drive small businesses like abattoirs out of business, do you know what happens? A lot of the same things happen, but they happen in someone’s garage or behind someone’s barn, where there is no regulation.

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Now, I’ve talked to the Minister of Rural Affairs and I’ve talked to the Minister of Agriculture and Food about this issue, but nowhere in the Local Food Act—and I know it’s not a popular issue maybe in some places. But nowhere in the Local Food Act does it say how we are actually going to—how would I put it?—make a ratio between the level of regulation and the level of risk. A big place like Maple Leaf Foods has a higher risk because it has way more coverage. If something goes wrong, they have way more coverage. That’s a huge, huge issue.

Another issue—much less contentious, perhaps—is access to local food across the province, specifically vegetables and stuff like that. Here, it’s the Toronto food terminal, right? There should be more food hubs across the province. I see the Conservative member; he’s nodding. In the PCs’ white paper, they have mentioned that there should be two more, but do you know what the problem with—the PCs suffer from the same problem that the Liberals suffer from. They make decisions based on political purposes. So is it just a coincidence—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Is it just a coincidence that the two places where there should be food terminals, according to the PCs, are where there are going to be by-elections? You know, you should kind of base—and the same thing: You want more food terminals? We should actually have a consultation process before the decision is made and actually pick the spots where they actually would work the best.

Mr. Michael Mantha: You hit a nerve. They’re both heckling you.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, I know. Everybody likes heckling.

So, in closing, I would like to make it very clear—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, don’t close.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, I’ve only got two minutes left. It went amazingly fast.

Our party is going to support—

Ms. Laurie Scott: You said you weren’t going to.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. We are going to support the Local Food Act going to committee, and it has to be the things that I've specified and the things that some of my more urban members are going to talk about, and some of my rural colleagues.

We want the Local Food Act to work, but the Local Food Act that has been proposed by the "new" Wynne government is just a press release, and we're going to have to work to make that actually work for local producers, for local retailers, for the processors and for the most important people, so people can actually have access to the food from Manitoulin, the food from Rainy River. I'm sure that in London there's some great local food. Davenport: There might even be local food in Davenport. I'm sure he will correct me. That's what we're supposed to do in this House.

I am incredibly disappointed with—I don't know how else to describe this bill—the laziness displayed in this bill. You've got to make it a lot better than this. We've actually got to get to the point where we have the goals and objectives, where we can vote on the goals and objectives before we pass the law. That would make sense to me.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm glad the Minister of Rural Affairs hears that, because I'm really shocked that he didn't pick this up. So be prepared for some major amendments—I'm sorry for the prop, Speaker. Be prepared for some major amendments so that we can actually make the Local Food Act work for Ontarians.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to congratulate the honourable member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. He is one of the nicest guys in the House, and he's also one of the most entertaining as well. He did a great job on his first hour.

The member made some great points about what's happening in Ontario and Ontario's economy with regard to the \$34 billion that agriculture and food bring into Ontario; the 700,000 jobs. Those are all great, positive things. We've recognized that. We've also recognized, as the member had said, that people in the cities now are looking for more local Ontario foods. I would say that they're looking now more because of our investments we've made in Foodland Ontario, for example. We've invested over \$100 million in Foodland Ontario since we took office. So people are aware of what's going on in Ontario.

I want to make a comment about Agriculture Week versus Local Food Week: I just don't understand. He's giving me the impression that he's insulted by this and that perhaps farmers are insulted by this, but we respect what farmers do, so we're tying the two together to say, "Let's bring those people from the cities to acknowledge what the agricultural community does." We can actually all work together, because that's what this bill is all about: It's about inspiration; it's about aspirational goals.

We're looking at setting targets in conjunction with stakeholders. We're not going to be imposing targets that are going to affect our trade obligations in the future. We have to be careful, because we can't have our borders shut as well, because Ontario exports a lot of good Ontario food to other jurisdictions as well. So we are mindful of our trade commitments. That's why the bill is written the way it is. Could there be improvements? Perhaps. Wait to see.

But I can tell you that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food right now has a great minister and has had one previously, since I was elected in 2011. She is focusing on all the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to give comment on my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane, a farmer who—we like to see the input from the agriculture groups here. We even like to see them get elected.

He termed this bill, the Local Food Act that has been brought in by the government, as—I like that—a "lazy bill." Can I use that? It's a lazy bill. It's a good press release; I agree with him on that too. But it is really not getting to the root of a lot of the problems that our rural communities, our agricultural communities, are facing, right? The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane is right: There's a huge disconnect with the Liberal government and rural Ontario. We saw that in the results of the last election.

He mentioned some certain sections in the bill that there's no question—I love it. It's that, "The minister may, to further the purposes of this act, establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food." So maybe they will, maybe they won't set targets. Maybe they will, maybe once every three years, kind of look at those reports, if they did set the targets or the goals to start with. So, very ambiguous terminology when really, what do you hear from small businesses? We're talking about agriculture in this bill—frustration; rules and regulations.

The PC caucus, under the direction of our critic, Ernie Hardeman, the member from Oxford, has done surveys. The number one thing: Rules and regulations are killing small business, driving farmers crazy; replications. I know that in my riding—it's a huge agricultural area and produces some of the finest products in Ontario; I'll give them a plug for sure—there's a billboard in one of the stores with just some of the permits. It's plastered with all of the permits that they have to have that are all, really, duplications. It could be streamlined much better. But that's just an example of some of the things that this government could actually do to improve the agriculture industry and that isn't reflected in this bill that we're debating today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection: Madam Speaker.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mrs. Speaker.

It gives me pleasure to speak to G36, the Local Food Act. It also gives me great pleasure to stand behind our critic for agriculture. He's a gentleman who speaks from the heart. He's a gentleman who speaks from his expertise. He's a gentleman who speaks from knowledge. He utmost, at the forefront, has a passion about farming in this province. It's something that I believe this House lacks. I'm so very honoured to have him as a colleague, as a part of our caucus, because he certainly brings a different insight, and a true insight, as to the struggles that the agricultural sector and the farmers are feeling in this province.

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I can only relate to some of the concerns that I have been dealing with through my riding which are not addressed in here, which is, how is this actually going to impact people from Algoma-Manitoulin? How are they going to be able to participate and what is it going to mean to them? What does "local food" mean to people on Manitoulin Island or along the North Shore? What does that mean? Local food—I know what it means to them. It means in my backyard, in our area. I don't see those being referenced in this act.

What I hear from them is a level of frustration that, once again, we're not included in this process. We're seeing—and I've used this term in the past—a fuzzy-wuzzy, nice little title, splashed media hit with no sustenance as far as the bill.

I've engaged with those communities and those individuals, and they're looking forward to participating in this process, but they're frustrated as to the venue that they're going to be given to have a concrete effect on what this bill is going to mean.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and pass comment on the comments from the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. Any time you hear from a person who is intimately involved in whatever issue we're dealing with in this House, it's a positive for this House, and I think we all learn a little bit more.

First and foremost, we should all realize that farming is an economic activity. Sometimes we treat it as if it's something other than that, and there's a partnership. There are people who produce, there are people who sell and there are people who buy. I reside in the buying end of things. We go out shopping for food on a pretty regular basis, and the way that I learned more about food myself as an individual and as a politician was from a farmer friend of mine.

His name is Jack Philbrick, and he owned a tender fruit farm in the Niagara area, down in Vineland. Jack and I would snowmobile together and sometimes we would boat together. We'd get talking about what we did that week, and Jack introduced me to what the everyday life of a farmer is like. For a person who's always lived in an urban setting his whole life, I learned an awful lot about what makes the business tick, what makes the

business of farming tick, how it could be better, how policies from the government can influence that, how the food business works in general in the United States and Canada.

Also, I team that up with obviously the concerns we all have in this House with childhood obesity, with healthy eating. It seems to me that it's self-evident that if we can eat local food, it's healthier for us, it's better for our economy, it's better for the farmers, it's better for everybody if we can make this act work.

It strikes me that this is an act we should all be pulling together on. If there's room for improvement on it, that's great. That's what the committee system is for. But it strikes me as a bill that we can all get behind, at least to get it to the committee. I think it's in everybody's best interest that we do.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to acknowledge the members from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin and the member from Oakville.

First to the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, all good comments. His ideas—you know, they thought they were doing a good thing, putting Agriculture Week and celebrating Local Food Week together. My response is, could you please provide me a list of the people you asked before you made that decision? That's one of the problems with this bill—consultation first. As far as worrying about trade agreements, you're setting goals and basically saying you're not—no one knows better than a dairy farmer about trade agreements. You're saying you can't pass an act with goals and objectives in the act, you have to sneak them in three years later. Well, then, we might as well not have an act.

The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, I agree with a lot of the things she said. The trick with regulations is, you can't throw the baby out with the bathwater. There are good regulations and there are regulations that are basically there for the sake of regulations, and not just for the sake of safety but for the sake of regulations.

My colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin has identified a big problem with this act. This act says everything to everybody, but if you really read it, it doesn't mean anything to anyone. Anyone can read themselves into the act, but it might not pertain to you at all. There are no definitions.

To the member from Oakville, I thank him for his comments. Just one thing: Farming isn't just an economic activity; it's a way of life.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a delight for me to enter the debate this afternoon. I must say, at the onset, it was not too long ago that I had the great opportunity to meet with my friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane. It was at the farmers' market, a Saturday morning in Peterborough.

The night before, I introduced him at the annual meeting and dinner for the Peterborough County Cattlemen's Association, and we showed a lot of Peterborough hospitality to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane on that particular day.

I rise today in the House to join the debate of second reading of Bill 36, the Local Food Act. I'd like to thank my colleagues for their contributions.

As Minister of Rural Affairs, strengthening our rural communities is a top priority. I know how important Ontario's agri-food sector is. It's a strong contributor to Ontario, our way of life and our economy.

Ontario's farmers, Madam Speaker, grow and raise more than 200 commodities. We have about 3,000 food and beverage manufacturing establishments here—more than any other province in Canada.

This sector is important. It's responsible for \$34 billion of provincial GDP and accounts for more than 700,000 jobs.

We also have all the elements of success: a lucrative marketplace in which more than 80% of primary grocery shoppers intend to buy Ontario fresh food; more retail interest than ever, with many restaurants and grocery stores highlighting local food on their menus and in their aisles; and one additional element for success that trumps most others, Ontario's innovative farmers who are willing to grow the foods that people want.

I want also to remind this House that we have kept our commitment to bring forward a local food bill. We've engaged people in a conversation about how we could encourage more people to ask for and buy local food, and we're acting on that important concept.

Last fall, my colleague—our colleague—Minister McMeekin introduced a bill on this subject, and I want to thank him for all of his effort and good work that he's put into this initiative.

Last month, we were pleased to carry that commitment forward with the introduction of a new local food bill. I'd like to remind the House about the key provisions of the local food bill and the considerations around them.

If passed, it would:

- allow for the establishment of goals and targets for local food through extensive consultation; we listened when stakeholders told us they didn't want targets imposed upon them. As a government, we'll work with the public sector organizations toward these goals and share information on successes and best practices;

- celebrate local food with a Local Food Week;

- have the minister prepare a local food report on government activities that support local food every three years.

As has been said, this bill is just one part of our comprehensive strategy. Beyond this legislation, we'll also:

- lead by example through the Ontario public-service-wide policy, requiring ministries to consider local for food procurements under \$25,000;

- educate about the benefits to all our population about local food;

- support communities and regions working on local food;

- consult with stakeholders on a provincial designation system;

- continue to promote the Good Things Grow in Ontario through our local Foodland Ontario program; and

- fund local food projects across this great province.

The more appreciation and demand we have for local food and locally produced food, the more we can strengthen Ontario's agriculture and food industry.

Looking back, for more than three decades Foodland Ontario has done great work to promote local food to consumers. Today, 94% of all Ontario principal grocery shoppers recognize the Foodland Ontario brand symbol, and I'm told it's only second to McDonald's. Foodland's website has more than 115,000 fans, more than 15,000 Twitter followers and a new Pinterest page as part of that outreach.

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Foodland Ontario is about building partnerships. It now has almost 500 logo holders. That's a 240% increase since it expanded beyond traditional fruit and vegetables to include protein, dairy, egg, processed foods, and specialty items such as maple syrup and indeed honey.

Foodland works closely with producers and their associations in promoting the good things that grow in Ontario, and it recognizes Ontario grocery retailers for working with them to promote Ontario food in their stores. There are some very specific success stories around local food, and I'd like to highlight them in my local area.

The Kawartha Lakes Food Charter was adopted in the spring of 2011 to act as "a guiding document to assist in the development of food-related policies and programs in the" broader Kawartha Lakes area. The Kawartha Lakes Food Charter supports "a just and sustainable food system" that includes a vibrant community food culture, food security, community health, a strong farming economy and a healthy ecosystem.

The development of the Kawartha Lakes Food Charter was spearheaded by the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit, the city of Kawartha Lakes economic development department, Toward Balance Support Network, Kawartha Region Conservation Authority, Victoria stewardship council, Kawartha Field Naturalists, individual farmers and citizens, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and the Ministry of Rural Affairs. The supporters of the charter are now actively working to develop action initiatives to implement the recommendations included in the Kawartha Lakes Food Charter.

Kawartha Choice FarmFresh is another example I'd like to mention. Kawartha Choice FarmFresh consists of a dynamic group of farmers, producers, chefs and retailers who promote and sell agricultural products grown and produced in the greater Kawartha region. Kawartha Choice FarmFresh members are individuals,

they're farms, partnerships or corporations who produce and sell within the greater Peterborough area and the city of Kawartha Lakes. From beef to buffalo, from honey to maple syrup, from apples to sweet corn, from wine and goat cheese to strawberries and emu meat, the Kawartha Choice FarmFresh logo is your assurance of the quality and integrity of locally grown food products.

The purpose of Kawartha Choice FarmFresh is to create a brand to identify these products to consumers who are eager to support local farms and businesses. The Kawartha Choice FarmFresh restaurant and food services members are local dining establishments that serve local products on their menus each and every day. Kawartha Choice FarmFresh also hosts a website that provides consumers with the opportunity to find Kawartha Choice FarmFresh farms, restaurants, retailers, farmers' markets and agritainment venues throughout the whole wide Kawartha region.

Kawartha Choice FarmFresh participates in fairs, trade shows and local food events to educate and inform consumers regarding the variety and availability of local food products. These events are a great forum for consumers to meet and talk directly to farmers and build new relationships. The Kawartha Choice FarmFresh website lists the following membership: farms, 116; agritainment operations, 23; restaurants and food services, 44; farmers' markets, 15; and retail establishments—Mr. Speaker, you'll want to know this—26.

There are also important points to bring forward around opportunities for broader public sector investment support. We want to bring more of the good things that grow in Ontario to your table, whether that table is in your kitchens at home or in our schools, daycares, hospitals and government buildings across this great province. That's why we're making investments to help increase the amount of fresh, healthy and delicious local foods in our public institutions right in Belleville, Ontario. Go to Belleville and you can take advantage of this kind of program. We've been successful.

Interjection: What about Scarborough?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Scarborough, here we come.

More Ontario food is now being served in daycares, schools, universities and colleges from Cochrane to Cobourg, from Windsor to Wingham, all across this great province. In the not-too-distant future, we'll be in Scarborough.

Our support helped launch the Greenbelt Fund's Ontariofresh.ca website as an electronic marketplace for more than 1,200 buyers and sellers of Ontario foods.

Combined, the total investments made by the province into broader public sector programming has resulted in \$26 million of additional Ontario food in the broader public sector, or a 5-to-1 return on investment for every public dollar spent. That's an incredible story on its own.

We are committed to continuing our support for initiatives that will bring more local food into Ontario's municipalities, long-term-care homes, hospitals and schools. It's a great thing we're doing, and we're going to keep moving forward.

Research and innovation is another important catalyst for agriculture and food. From current research into milk with cancer-fighting mineral supplements to healthier starches for everyday diets, agri-food scientists are coming up with new ways to provide healthier food for every resident in the great province of Ontario.

In addition, the University of Guelph and Wilfrid Laurier are looking at local food distribution systems that bring communities together around food hubs for healthier, local foods. This is supported by the great Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and the Ministry of Rural Affairs' New Directions Research Program.

Researchers are also trying to improve the nutrition uptake for residents of health care and long-term-care facilities through the important inclusion of local food in residence diets every day.

Mr. Speaker, science is helping the agri-food sector advance in other ways, like the intelligent vegetable-harvesting robots. Researchers at the university have developed this technology. This could emerge as a revolutionary technology for the Canadian greenhouse industry, giving growers a competitive edge.

The greenhouse story is important. Greenhouses in the Leamington area and the Niagara Peninsula are now exporting their product to the United States on a frequent basis. That's what Ontario innovation is all about.

On all fronts, people are working together to enhance and strengthen Ontario's agriculture and food industry and move us forward into this next century.

My friends, like we should be doing in this House, working together is key. We need to remember and value what is at the heart of it all: our land and the people who grow our food. Without them, we don't have any of the other great innovations, we don't have science developments, and business will not be able to grow and prosper.

Local food has many benefits—and a desire for healthy food goes hand in hand with what this conversation is all about.

How can we support healthy eating for our children and the next generation and ourselves? We know that type 2 diabetes, once known as a seniors' disease, is now affecting our schoolchildren. We know that the lion's share of our tax dollars goes to covering health care costs in this province. We are what we eat, so choosing healthy foods can have a significant impact on our quality of life and our economy. All of us in this House—and every Ontarian—have a stake in all of this.

Ontario's agri-food industry has already shown that it can adapt to changing needs. From ethnically diverse foods to foods that address special dietary needs like nut-free and gluten-free, the province's agri-food industry is already responding to different consumer demands. But there's always more we can do. Today's consumers are engaged in learning about food. They're reading labels. They're asking where their food comes from and how it is grown and produced. They also care who is behind this production. They want to know more about their food. They want to support Ontario's farmers and Ontario's food processors. With our local food bill and strategy,

we'll keep these important conversations going. We want to help this industry to continue to meet consumer demands.

I would like to close by reminding everyone that when we choose foods that are grown and made here at home, it is good for our families, it is good for our community, and it is especially good for Ontario farmers.

Our local food bill and the broader strategy will help more people find, buy and eat Ontario-grown, Ontario-harvested and Ontario-made food and beverages wherever they are, from every corner of this great province.

I encourage Ontario consumers to choose Ontario foods first whenever they can, and I salute the hard-working farmers and food processors and all the businesses connected to our agri-food industry for the great work they continue to do each and every day. Let's continue to support local food together, because when we work together we can build a better Ontario and make Ontario stronger for every one of our citizens.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn): Speakers and comments.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to respond or to comment on what the Minister of Rural Affairs said. We're disappointed as a caucus—as are many stakeholders and people in rural Ontario, of course—with this government and with this bill, because it really doesn't do enough to support agriculture and local food. We understand that to support local food you need to support our farmers. This bill does nothing to address the challenges farmers are facing, such as red tape and regulation.

I know my colleague from Oxford as well as many PC MPPs surveyed our farmers over the last year; we did an online survey across the province to really engage our farmers and people in rural Ontario, and they're really concerned about the red tape and overregulation. Also, increasing hydro costs; we now know that there's going to be a hydro bill increase on May 1. And according to the Auditor General yesterday, the Mississauga gas plant scandal is going to cost ratepayers \$275 million; that's going to be put on farmers' hydro bills as well.

We're seeing, across rural Ontario, abattoirs closing. This bill does nothing to help the abattoirs across rural Ontario. Of course, finally, is the destruction of Ontario's horse racing industry. Thousands of jobs have been lost; we know thousands of jobs will be lost in the future.

Again, we need to support our farmers, we really need to support rural Ontario, and this bill just doesn't do enough. Agriculture and local food organizations submitted a large number of ideas and proposals for this bill which were largely ignored by the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government, who instead chose to introduce a bill with no substance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn): Further speakers?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to join the debate, particularly on this issue. I'm glad to see food on the agenda here at Queen's Park. I've looked at the bill, and I

think, as my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane said, this is a plan to make a plan. It has very little substance that will actually support farmers in Ontario.

I think there is a real appetite—pardon the pun—in Ontario; I know that in my community there is an appetite for local food. People in urban centres like Toronto do want to support our rural friends, but I think we actually need some drivers put into this bill that are going to support the farm community, and that's what I don't see here right now. Unfortunately, while the Minister of Agriculture made a nice speech, there aren't that many people who tune in to the legislative channel, not enough people that will actually influence buying habits in Ontario.

While Grandma Grace does tune in regularly—good afternoon, Grandma; thanks for tuning in—she's already a supporter of locally grown food. The trick is to actually build in some education, which would be one thing for the broader Ontario community to support our farmers here, which is why one of the things that I am going to talk about when it's my turn is to actually bring some food education into our school curriculum. That's something that Sustain Ontario has recommended. I know from my experience working in schools in the past that some of the best educators in this province are actually kids; they go home and they tell their parents about the things they're learning. I know in my family that's how we got my dad to finally recycle, by going home and telling him, "Dad, you should really do this."

But in this bill right now there's nothing that actually helps that education process. I think there's a lot that we can do. It's a framework in place that we should build on—and I too would support this bill, but to make sure that we actually put some calories and some nutrition into this bill, because right now it's a bit empty.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn): Further speakers?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd really like to congratulate the Minister of Rural Affairs for doing a great job at outlining some of the initiatives in his local riding and right across Ontario, from Belleville to Cobourg. Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, as everyone knows, has a number of local initiatives as well that I fully support.

I want to take a few moments to clarify exactly what the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane was asking about as far as some of the definitions, like what "local food" is. Local food, as he had indicated, is "produced or harvested in Ontario," and/or "subject to any limitations in the regulations, food and beverages made in Ontario if they include ingredients produced or harvested in Ontario." What I would like to say with regard to his comments on apple pie that has cinnamon in it is, that would qualify 100% under this initiative.

I can tell you that every time I drive down the 401, I pass the Big Apple, and I sometimes stop in to purchase a good apple pie from there. There's Colborne—Port Colborne.

With regard to the two different ministries, now we have agriculture and food, and a great minister paying a

lot of attention to farmers' needs and building on all of the great work we've done over the last number of years; and the Minister of Rural Affairs, Mr. Leal, who has taken on a very important portfolio. I thought it was a great idea to break up the two ministries. Now we're able to focus on a number of issues and differentiating between the two ministries.

I can tell you, as parliamentary assistant previously to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, that was a huge, huge portfolio, a huge ministry. As the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane had mentioned, over 200 commodities are produced.

Now we have focused attention on rural affairs and agriculture and food. It was the right way to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn): Further speakers?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to stand up and join the conversation here on this very important bill in the Legislature. I'd like to thank the member from Peterborough, the Minister of Rural Affairs, for that paid political announcement. That's basically what it was.

He talks about the fact that we can accomplish this if we all just work together. It sounds great in the Legislature, it sounds great at press conferences across the province, but when it comes down to the nuts and bolts of actually working together, it just doesn't seem to work that way.

This bill has been called a lot of things here this afternoon. I believe the member from the third party called it a "fuzzy-wuzzy" bill. We've heard "lazy bill" here today. I think we've heard "window dressing." We've heard "public relations ploy." We've heard "propaganda" and "PR." It's anything but a bill that is going to fix local food and encourage more local food in the province of Ontario.

I can tell you, coming from Prince Edward-Hastings—and much of Prince Edward-Hastings is a rural riding; we do have the city of Belleville, but there's an awful lot of agriculture and a lot of food production facilities in Prince Edward-Hastings. This bill does nothing to address the needs in Prince Edward-Hastings. We've talked about it all afternoon.

I happen to be the critic for red tape for the Progressive Conservative Party. This bill does not address red tape in agriculture or in local food production. It's a huge issue, and the government just seems to breeze past it.

There are many, many items that are affecting rural Ontario. I know that the Minister of Rural Affairs is very concerned about these, but it seems as if his hands are tied a little bit by maybe his Toronto residents that sit in cabinet with him. He's not tackling the issues in the Green Energy Act and dealing with municipalities' control in placing these green energy projects.

We've seen what's happened with the harness racing industry. It's just been shameful, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn): I'll return now to the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I've really got to thank all my fine colleagues who provided comments: Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Davenport, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and my good friend the radio announcer from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is unprecedented in history by bringing forward the Local Food Act. I want to invite all my good friends from the official opposition and the third party, every Saturday morning, to where I'm at: the Peterborough farmers' market.

Let me tell you about the Peterborough farmers' market. It's at the Morrow Building exhibition grounds in Peterborough, right beside the memorial centre. The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane witnessed that when he was there. I gave him the royal Peterborough welcome. Every vendor has the Kawartha Choice sign. When you go in there, Mr. Speaker, you see this locally grown food, whether it's beef or buffalo, pork or venison, or strawberries or asparagus, or my favourite, Brussels sprouts, or potatoes or turnips—it's all there under the Kawartha Choice umbrella—the opportunity to see firsthand the men and women who work so hard each and every day to provide the best-quality food not only from my area but from right across Ontario.

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So this negativism that was displayed, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon is not what's going on in the back concessions of rural Ontario. We're growing the best food in the world.

When the former Premier went to China in January, that was an opportunity to sell more Ontario-produced food to the Chinese market.

Ontario food is the best in the world.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn): Further speakers?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 36, the Local Food Act.

Like many other bills this government has introduced this session, the Local Food Act is very familiar. While a few changes have been made to this bill, it is pretty much the same as what the government tabled before they decided to prorogue for four long months. As some of my colleagues have said during the debate surrounding Bill 11, the ambulance act, it's like the movie Groundhog Day: We've heard it all before.

The new Local Food Act that the McGuinty-Wynne government introduced does little to promote local food. It is filled with lofty goals and ideals, but it has very little substance.

Here's what subsection 4(1) of the bill, under the heading "Goals and targets," says: "The minister may, to further the purposes of this act, establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food." To me, Speaker, these are very weak words. It does not demonstrate a commitment to local food.

In subsection 4(2), under "Consultation," the bill says, "Before establishing or amending a goal or target, the minister shall consult organizations..."

Under subsection 4(3), it says, "A goal or target may be general or particular in its application" It may be general or it may be particular.

What is the government trying to say? It seems to me that they are trying to have it both ways. "May," "shall," "aspire"—these are all vague words, and they do little to promote local food.

We in the Ontario PC caucus support local food. Coming from a rural riding, I know first-hand about the importance of agriculture. Farming and agri-food contributes more than \$33 billion to the Ontario economy each year and employs 700,000 Ontarians.

Ontario is Canada's largest food processor. According to the association of Ontario food processors, there are about 3,000 small and large food and drink processors in the province. These can be large operations such as Heinz, located where I grew up in Essex county, or they can be small bakeries that employ a few staff.

In order to have local food, you need local farmers. This government's love of red tape and duplication has forced many food processors and agribusinesses out of business. A glaring example is the closure of many small abattoirs. I've talked to people such as Joe Abate of Abate Packers in Arthur. Joe is also president of the Ontario Independent Meat Processors. I have also talked to the owners of Harriston Packers, the Oelschlagel family. These gentlemen tell me that the only constant thing in their business is that they never know what to expect when an inspector visits. Some weeks the rules say one thing, and the next week there's something different. It just depends on who the inspector is.

I believe in food safety. Don't get me wrong: That is paramount. However, when we have small business operators facing rules and regulations that are like a moving target, it's no wonder that Ontario abattoirs are closing.

I have heard about one operator who was told that his meat-cutting counter had to be a certain number of inches from the floor. A few weeks later, a different inspector visited the operation and told him that the counter should be a different number of inches from the floor. With changing rules, how can a small business owner compete? With new regulations coming at them from every direction, how can they stay in business? The answer, sadly, is that many of them are not staying in business. Without local abattoirs, we cannot have local meat in our restaurants.

On the topic of local restaurants, I would like to talk about the renowned Stratford Chefs School in my riding. Students come from across the globe to come to Stratford to learn skills and gain experience in the culinary field. Some of the graduates go on to international careers and many others establish local restaurants. They want to serve local food. The customers ask for it, and they know that local food is safe, fresh and delicious. However, because of the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals' regulatory barriers, red tape and duplication, they are finding it more and more difficult to source locally raised meat to serve their customers.

The part-time Minister of Agriculture—sorry, make that Agriculture and Food. I forgot to include the "food" part just like she did in her swearing-in ceremony. Well, she promised to bring forward a new, stronger Local Food Act upon becoming Premier. What I see in Bill 36 does not live up to that promise. We have a weak bill, filled with weak words and weak commitments.

One other area of the Local Food Act I'd like to talk about is section 3. It says, "The week beginning on the Monday before Thanksgiving Day in each year is proclaimed as Local Food Week." Well, Speaker, we already have a week set aside at this time for special recognition. It is Ontario Agriculture Week. My predecessor, former Perth MPP Bert Johnson, introduced a bill to proclaim Ontario Agriculture Week in 1998. The Ontario Legislature passed Bert's bill with all-party support. Now the Premier/Minister of Agriculture and Food wants to replace this important week with Local Food Week. It seems she forgot all about Ontario Agriculture Week—cut and paste. Ontario Agriculture Week is a credit to Bert, a credit to Perth-Wellington and, most importantly, a credit to farmers. Why in the world would anyone want to replace it?

As I said before, in order to have local food, you need local farmers, but the government doesn't seem to get this; otherwise, they wouldn't have forced new eco fees on farm tires. Farmers are facing huge increases. Farmers across Perth-Wellington and the entire province are outraged by these enormous fees. This is one more Liberal tax increase they cannot afford.

As my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga has pointed out, the Liberals have now begun to tinker with these fees. They have slightly adjusted their eco tax funding formula to delay part of the massive new charges being added to farmers' bills for tractors and farm equipment. Instead of facing a 2,000% increase, they are going to charge them 1,000% this year and 1,000% next year. Only a Liberal would take pride in this. You don't solve the problem, you just delay it; you defer it, you pass it on to another year.

Another way the McGuinty-Wynne government has put up barriers to our farmers and agri-food sector is through skyrocketing hydro rates. With their failed Green Energy Act and the scandalous cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants, the Liberals clearly show they do not have an energy policy. They figure it out on the back of an envelope and hope for the best. The dramatic hydro rates that Ontario residents are facing show that this approach is not working. If this government truly wanted to promote local food, they would reduce red tape, lower hydro rates and help our farmers instead of hindering them.

One example of the red tape and the runaround that farmers face is when trying to certify grain dryers. The Canadian Standards Association is no longer precertifying grain dryers and the TSSA, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, a provincial body, is now charged with the responsibility for field inspections instead. Farmers in Perth-Wellington have told me that the TSSA

is a large, complicated and expensive bureaucracy. When they need to repair or replace a burner on their grain dryers, they can wait for an inspector to come from Toronto to inspect the part. Mother Nature doesn't wait. When the crops are ready to be harvested, they are ready to be harvested.

I have written to the former and current Ministers of Agriculture and Food on this issue, as well as the Minister of Consumer Services. I have met with local representatives of the Grain Farmers of Ontario to find out how this problem can be addressed. I have asked questions in the House about the grain dryer issue, and I have been working with my caucus colleagues to find a solution to this important issue.

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The grain farmers supply Ontario, and in fact the world, with high-quality products. The Grain Farmers of Ontario is an organization that represents Ontario's 28,000 growers of corn, soybeans and wheat. Their farmers' crops cover five million acres of farmland across the province and are a major economic driver for Canada. Ontario-grown corn, soybean and wheat crops generate over \$2.5 billion in farm gate receipts. They result in over \$9 billion of economic output and are responsible for over 40,000 jobs in the province. Clearly, grain farmers are an important part of the agri-food sector.

When they face red tape from the TSSA, everyone is affected. As I said before, if you want local food, you need local farmers. This government's red tape and duplication is hurting local farmers.

Earlier, I talked about the fact that this bill is just like the previous Local Food Act the government introduced last fall. As Yogi Berra said, "It's déjà vu all over again." Farmers, commodity groups, agriculture stakeholders and the PC caucus all put forward a number of proposals that would strengthen our food system. Our suggestions would increase access to local food and help our agricultural sector. We are disappointed that the government has chosen to ignore these initiatives and reintroduce the same weak act as they did before. One of the organizations that put forth concrete ways to improve the Local Food Act was Sustain Ontario. They carefully considered our agriculture industry and food system and made many important suggestions to the government.

In April 2012, Sustain Ontario released a draft of their plan called the Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy: A Plan for Healthy Food and Farming. It contained 81 specific strategies the government should consider. They even provided examples of policies and policy-related activities that would support each of these actions. But did the McGuinty-Wynne government listen to Sustain Ontario? No. After all the consultation Sustain Ontario did, there is only one of those initiatives reflected in this Local Food Act: government procurement.

There is nothing in Bill 36 to recognize the many parts of our food system. It fails to meet the feedback they received from stakeholders requesting more food education. It neglects to set measures to provide people with the skills and knowledge they need to support healthy

eating. The Local Food Act, in its current form, does nothing to increase access for Ontarians to local food or address the economic impact on our food system.

I also read a document sent to me by the Canadian Environmental Law Association. It was a model for a new, improved Local Food Act. The Canadian Environmental Law Association put forward many concrete ideas on how to make this legislation better. Their proposed bill is 28 pages long. The government's bill is only four pages long. Clearly, Bill 36 is short on detail and short on content.

Agriculture is a vital part of our economy and our lives. The importance of agriculture couldn't be more evident than in my riding of Perth-Wellington. In Perth-Wellington, 20% of all jobs are tied to agriculture. For every on-farm job, there are an additional 1.26 jobs off the farm.

In Wellington county, agriculture represents in excess of \$433 million in total gross farm receipts. The food and other agricultural products that sustain us are the result of the skill, hard work and dedication of Ontario farm families and farming communities.

Farmers supply us with delicious, safe and affordable food. Ontario farmers grow more than 200 different agricultural commodities, including a variety of foods such as fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy products, greenhouse vegetables and ornamental flowers. Farmers in Perth-Wellington grow the best food in Ontario. We also have some of the best restaurants, shops, farmers' markets and events that showcase and promote local foods.

One of the events that celebrates local food is Savour Stratford. This culinary event draws thousands of people, and 2013 will be the sixth annual celebration. Savour Stratford was awarded the best culinary experience in Ontario by the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance. Savour Stratford features chefs who use local food to make delicious dishes and it showcases local retailers who sell local food. It is a wonderful celebration held every September, and I encourage all members of the House to attend. They even have a culinary getaway, with special offers at local restaurants and bed and breakfasts.

Another way that local food is celebrated in Perth-Wellington is through the Butter Tart Trail. Winding through Wellington North, the trail includes stops at various antique shops, farm markets, artisan studios and, of course, bakeries that serve butter tarts. Some favourites include the butter tart served with a scoop of ice cream and the official goat butter tart, made from real goat milk butter. Not only is this a delicious way to explore Wellington North, but it is an economic development tool. I want to commend the council and staff of Wellington North, the tourism committee and all of our local businesses that take part in the Butter Tart Trail.

Farmers in Perth-Wellington need a new and improved Local Food Act and an act with firm goals and strong commitments, not weak words and vague goals. The government should look to Perth-Wellington if they

want to know how to do local food right. As Savour Stratford says:

"We have been cultivating our local culinary heritage and pleasing palates since 1832.

"Some would say our passion for great food is larger than our passion for the theatre.

"It begins with the quality and freshness of our organic produce, our artisanal breads and cheeses, pasture-fed organic beef, Amish-raised goat milk and heritage pork—all originating from surrounding Perth county."

Producers in Wellington county also know about the importance of local food. They sell their products at local farmers' markets in Palmerston and Harriston, and many of them supply goods for the Slow Food movement in Guelph. The McGuinty-Wynne government could learn a lot from the Slow Food movement. The goal of Slow Food is to connect food producers with consumers and to support and advocate for food choices that are good, clean and fair. There's a Slow Food market in Stratford every Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. that accomplishes this very goal. I hope that all members of the House have a chance to visit sometime.

The Slow Food movement knows about the importance of connecting food producers with consumers. We in the Ontario PC Party know this as well. In our white paper *Respect for Rural Ontario*, we have put forward the idea of creating a new regional food terminal in order to bring local food to local consumers. This is an idea that should be explored.

The Ontario Food Terminal in Toronto has done a great job in promoting local food. I had the opportunity to tour the terminal earlier this year, and I was impressed by the measures they have taken to support local producers. However, the food terminal is bursting at the seams. It has outgrown its home. Instead of expanding on expensive lands in Toronto, our white paper proposes looking at building a new regional food terminal. This is something that Sustain Ontario, the Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming, agrees with. They note that regional food hubs contribute to a better Ontario in the following ways:

- They provide small and medium-sized farm operations with increased market access, therefore leading to economic benefits for both farmers and consumers.

- Regional food terminals are also better for the environment. Food travels less distance.

- Regional food terminals also re-establish farm-to-city links. Sustain Ontario notes that as our food is produced further away, citizens lose sight of where their food comes from and what to do with it.

Earlier this month, I hosted an agricultural round table in Clifford. Along with my colleagues the member from Huron-Bruce and the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, we heard from farmers from across the region. They told us about their concerns with rising taxes, rising hydro rates, and rising red tape and duplication. They told us that they worry about the next generation of farmers. Many young farmers cannot take over the family farm because of increasing production costs.

The participants at the round table also talked about the improvements that are needed to our risk management programs. We heard about the negative impact that this government's cancellation of the Slots at Racetracks Program has had on our region. We also heard about the concerns with the Green Energy Act. People are upset that their local, elected municipal councils are being over-ruled. Local municipalities are not allowed authority over the placement of industrial wind turbines.

People attending the agriculture round table also raised the issue of municipal infrastructure funding. They worry that rural and small-town Ontario are being left behind as this government focuses on funding transit in large urban centres.

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Earlier this month, I had an opportunity to participate in the annual MP and MPP forum hosted by the Perth County Federation of Agriculture. Farmers talked about the impact that this government's policy is having on them. They raised many concerns, including eco fees on farm tires, the power of the OSPCA, the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund, and the Green Energy Act and Risk Management Program.

Bill 36 does not help move local food from our farmers' fields into local stores and restaurants. The bill does little to bring Ontario food into our government institutions, and it does not help put more local food on dinner tables across the province. It would be respectful to a previous member, Bert Johnson, to not replace his bill with this bill. We must maintain Ontario Agriculture Week out of respect for Bert and our farmers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's a pleasure to be able to rise and contribute to the debate on this bill. As the member from Perth-Wellington said, this is a bill that is short on detail and short on content. It is essentially a plan to create a plan.

Earlier today, my colleague and seatmate the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane raised some very good points: that this legislation was really created without substance and that essentially what the government decided was, "Well, let's implement the act, and then sometime in the next three years we can develop some goals and targets." It's sort of like putting the cart before the horse, and it doesn't make a lot of sense.

I'm not an expert, but I also don't claim to be an expert, and this is a government that has messed up. First of all, as my colleague mentioned, this is a government that proposed putting the Local Food Week in May, and then it was brought to their attention that we don't necessarily have a lot of local food that's harvested in Ontario and is ready for the first week of May—and then they changed that to the week before Thanksgiving, which is in direct competition with Agriculture Week. This is a government that's been essentially in a tailspin, right from the very moment that the Premier was sworn in as the Minister of Agriculture, only to later be sworn in as the Minis-

ter of Agriculture and Food, and they still can't get it right.

What this government needs to do is, first of all, learn the file before they propose any kind of feel-good legislation. They need to consult with and they need to listen to the people who live and work in the industry, because there is a lot of knowledge to be gained. I mean, just listening to my seatmate was an educational experience for me. I know what I learned in one hour already goes a long way towards realizing that this bill falls drastically short.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to congratulate the member from Perth-Wellington on his remarks. However, I do have some concerns.

The member makes a claim that this is a weak act with weak goals. Well, Madam Speaker, I can tell you that that surprises me, coming from a member of the Conservative Party that has consistently requested a reduction in red tape, which this government has undertaken in a number of circumstances. I think what he's asking is to implement more red tape and actually force people who are taking the local initiatives to hit certain targets.

Well, that's not what the bill is about. This is a bill about public awareness. It's an aspirational bill. It's a bill to encourage people in the cities to work with our farming community. It's for our farmers to respect the people in the cities and encourage them to work in partnership with them as well.

So I do take somewhat of a concern—not an offence, but a concern—to the fact that there's some discussion on whether agricultural week can be mixed with Local Food Week. Well, let me tell you, from my perspective, I think they go hand in hand. I mentioned previously that there's no reason why people right across Ontario can't support our agricultural community by sharing in a very important week for our farmers and having all Ontarians work together to support the things that they do, the things that they grow and the great produce that they provide to our urban areas.

I don't understand. I think they had to look, on the other side, for something to complain about, because I think the stakeholders like this. Madam Speaker, I met with AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. They respect the fact that we're respecting them. They don't want set targets. They don't want legislation that's going to force them—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Northumberland-Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a great honour to stand here today and talk about this proposed bill by the Liberals.

My esteemed colleague here from Perth-Wellington said so eloquently how former member Mr. Bert Johnson, who represented his riding with distinction and was a Deputy Speaker, deserves full credit for everything that he fought for: for rural Ontario, agriculture and food.

I just want to say that this government seems to have forgotten, if they didn't know already—they're trying to take ownership of something they don't understand or respect, and know nothing about, and that's rural Ontario. I have grave concerns, coming from rural Ontario and being a beef producer and a cash crop producer myself. I can speak with some knowledge and understanding of the people of Northumberland-Quinte West who provide this province, like other farmers across this great province, with the food that's required, that we bring to large urban centres here.

I'd be more than willing to have the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell come down to my farm in my great riding of Northumberland-Quinte West and give him a tour of the Big Apple in Colborne and seeing some of that local produce being distributed and baked there.

Also, I would encourage the member to come down. It's almost stone-picking season, and I could use an extra hand. If he really wants to see the work ethic and the ingenuity and how Ontario was built and prospers in rural Ontario, I encourage him to come down. We'll water him, we'll feed him and we'll make sure that he sleeps soundly at night, because we work a little bit harder than we do here at Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've been sitting here, listening to a lot of the debate that has been going on. Again, I must say I've enjoyed a brief discussion that I've had with a colleague of mine who actually knows this field, who comes from the farming field, and that's the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Anyway, when I was reading the purpose, it says:

"Purposes

"1. The purposes of this act are as follows:

"1. To foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario." Maybe for a local farmer up in my area or across the north, it can translate to this. It says: "The government will take credit for the initiatives of innovation practices by local farmers."

If you look at number 2, it says, "To increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food." But when you do a translation for a local farmer in northern Ontario, it says, "The government will capitalize on pre-existing advertising developed by local farmers' markets." Could be.

If you look at, "3. To encourage the development of new markets for local food," well, to them, it means, "The government told you to do it, work it, set it up, research it. Then we'll say we helped you do it."

Mr. John Vanthof: That's about it.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes. When you look at it—and I don't want to make—

Mr. John Vanthof: Plain northern language.

Mr. Michael Mantha: But that's in plain northern Ontario farmers' language, where there really isn't very

much—and I'm really looking forward, later on in the week, to bringing in a lot of the aspects and the opinions from farmers in Algoma-Manitoulin, because there are many of them and their voices are not being heard. I'm hoping that I can give them a little bit of a voice here—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Perth-Wellington has two minutes to respond.

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Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the members from Kenora-Rainy River, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Northumberland-Quinte West and Algoma-Manitoulin for their comments.

Farmers don't need more regulation. They don't need it. When we moved to the Monkton area and bought the dairy farm, we used to take our animals to an abattoir just around the corner—handy as anything. It's gone because the owner there, a number of years ago, said, "Enough's enough. I'm getting out of this thing. I can't stand these guys running around, telling me how to do my business." So over-regulation has been a—

Interjection: A thorn.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —a thorn in the side of business in rural Ontario for years. This government seems to come up with schemes to increase their income all the time, and they seem to burden rural Ontario, as they do urban Ontario. The eco fee tax is just a perfect example.

I've got a letter here from Darcy Higgins, executive director of Food Forward, and he says, "A Local Food Act should support all hospitals, education and other institutions to increase their purchase of local, socially, environmentally sustainable food." They also want the government "to conduct a review of business regulations to ensure that small-scale food and farm enterprises have a level playing field and a fair chance." Why wouldn't you do that? Because red tape seems to be in your blood.

These are great ideas, and I thank Food Forward for their input on how the Local Food Act can be improved. Mr. Higgins also points out in his email that the purchase of sustainable food is the fastest-growing part of the agri-food sector. He notes that "young farmers and entrepreneurs are choosing to produce artisanal and culturally diverse foods."

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: As always, it's an honour for me to rise in this assembly on behalf of the people of Davenport, and I'm happy to speak to Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013.

Local food is a matter of great importance to the people across this province, and it's of great interest to me and to residents of my community in Davenport. Bill 36 is a first step toward supporting local food in Ontario. It shows that this government has finally gotten the message that local food must be made a provincial priority.

Unfortunately, Bill 36 in its current form does little to guarantee real government action. It does little to begin the transformation of our current food system, to actually support Ontario farmers or encourage more sustainable

farming. Bill 36 does little more than promise a conversation about local food. It does little more than establish a Local Food Week in October, and we've heard about some of the problems with that chosen week.

I'm quite sure that we can do better. So while it might be hard to muster up too much excitement about the promise of another conversation from this Liberal government, I believe that this is an opportunity for the growing food movement in Ontario to come to the table, to push for a comprehensive food strategy and to demand real action on food security.

New Democrats will see this bill go to committee so that the good people of Ontario can bring their ideas to the table to make it stronger. But this government needs to stop playing lip service to the idea of local food, and it should commit to real action through legislation that would promote local food in Ontario.

I believe that it's time to put food first in Ontario. It's time that parliamentarians and policy-makers start to take notice and pay attention to an issue that is on the minds of people in Ontario. It's on the minds of people from Toronto to London, from Prince Edward county to Attawapiskat. Food is on the minds of people in Ontario. It's on the minds of busy parents who are thinking about what they're going to feed their kids for dinner tonight when they get home after a long day at work, and it's also on the mind of the parent who has lost his job and is grappling with how he will put food on the table for his family this month.

Of course, food is always on the minds of our farmers who struggle to pay their bills in Ontario. Food is also on the minds of our doctors and nurses, who watch as a generation of children is raised on processed sugary and salty foods. I think that food is on the minds of our teachers in Ontario, who saw too many of their students arrive at school this morning struggling to concentrate because they didn't have breakfast.

Food—nutritious, sustainably farmed, accessible Ontario food—should be top of mind when it comes to public policy. But only a few parliamentarians have brought these issues into this House. My colleague France Gélinas, the health critic for the NDP, understands the health costs of poor nutrition. This is why she has pushed in this House for better food labelling on chain restaurant menus. My colleague Rosario Marchese has advocated the banning of advertisements that push junk food on children. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, introduced a local food act back in 2010.

All of my colleagues who enter this House and represent our communities as New Democrats—not as Liberals, not as Conservatives—do so because it is our fundamental belief that no one should be left behind in Ontario. These are the roots of our party going back to the CCF that brought together farmers and labour groups, and these are the same principles that guide New Democrats today. Call it democratic socialism or social democracy, but we work with the NDP because we believe it is our collective challenge, our collective struggle, our col-

lective responsibility, to fairly share the bounty of this province and make sure that no person goes hungry.

This is why we fight for public services. This is why we fight for affordable housing, fair wages, social assistance and child care for everyone. This is why we continue to speak up for those who are falling behind and for those who are being pushed out of our cities and pushed off their farms because life has become too expensive. It's because access to nutritious food should not be a privilege that's reserved for only some.

We believe that every person in Ontario should be able to put good, healthy food on their table, and if imitation is the highest form of flattery, then I suppose New Democrats should be somewhat flattered. That's because of the bill from back in 2010 that was brought forward by Ontario NDP leader, Andrea Horwath. She introduced a bill back then called the Government of Ontario Buy Local Food Act. Ms. Horwath's bill contained some similar objectives to the current bill we're debating today.

While the current bill, Bill 36, really only begins to identify local food as an issue of importance, Ms. Horwath's bill proposed concrete steps for action that would begin to transform our food system. Horwath's bill would have required provincial government ministries to purchase local food. It would also establish firm targets for buying local food and organic food, unlike this government's bill, which makes targets optional.

In contrast to Andrea Horwath's bill which had concrete, practical steps and a timeline for action to support an Ontario local food system, the government's current bill reads more like a plan to make a plan. Now, perhaps this bill is the result of hard-learned lessons from this government to stop over-promising and under-delivering. After all, we've been through this before. If big government statements and broken promises could feed the people of Ontario, we'd have an abundance of local food for every person in this province.

The fact is that, once again, the people of Ontario are far ahead of the Liberal government of Ontario. Certainly many individuals in Ontario take steps to support local food and local farmers by searching out and purchasing Ontario-grown food at their grocery stores and farmers' markets. I'd invite members of the Legislature to travel west on College Street on any given Thursday afternoon and join the hundreds of Davenport residents at the Dufferin Grove farmers' market. This is one of many farmers' markets across the city that are making the connections between rural and urban Ontario and making the connections between field and table.

Others are making individual choices to join a CSA, a community-supported agriculture program. This is something that we do in my home where, at the beginning of the season, we pay an upfront investment to support a small farm run by our good friend Tony Neale at Wheelbarrow Farm just outside of Toronto. This helps him make the necessary inputs at his farm. In return, he delivers a box of fresh, locally produced, sustainably grown food to one of our neighbours every second week where we can just walk down the street and pick it up.

Many people in Davenport are already growing their own food, in fact, in their backyards, or they're sharing a backyard or a community garden plot. All of these individual choices and actions are important, but if we are to make significant progress towards a more sustainable food system in Ontario, it's time for the Ontario government to take its cue from the people of Ontario and introduce meaningful legislation to put Ontario food first.

For years before I was elected to represent Davenport in this Legislature, I worked in the Davenport community as a community worker. I worked for an organization called The Stop Community Food Centre. The Stop has innovative food programs that have in fact captured the imaginations of people across our city, and their impressive staff and volunteers have helped to raise issues of food security across Toronto. The Stop's food programs include community gardening, community kitchens. These bring people together, build community, and increase food literacy and food skills.

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On most weekdays, The Stop provides free meals to low-income community members. Incredibly, many of these meals are now using fresh ingredients purchased from local farmers. The Stop does all of this good work with very little help from this government. Instead, The Stop delivers its food programs thanks to the help of thousands of donations from private donors. I think this highlights the problem in Ontario. While individuals and not-for-profit organizations are doing their part to build a better food system, our government is not doing their part. Even though we know that every job in the agricultural sector supports four additional jobs in the local economy, the government continues to let us down. It's time for the government to step up and make a real commitment to put food first in Ontario.

The truth is that so many people in Ontario have all but given up on government. Instead of demanding that government protect the public interest, protect our natural resources, protect our food, land and water, and protect our health, many in the food movement have given up on government. They look elsewhere for hope. Admirably food activists persist on their own to take action as individuals in their communities or small organizations.

The North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Taskforce, for example, recently demonstrated the power of rural and urban folks working together when it effectively mobilized strong opposition to the Melancthon mega quarry. On the heels of this victory, NDACT has been pushing for reform of the Aggregate Resources Act and the provincial policy statement to protect prime agricultural farmland and Ontario's drinking water. The Ontario government should be listening to groups like these who are advocating for policies that will protect our food security now and into the future.

The not-for-profit sector has proven time and again the value of food programming. Organizations like The Stop, like Foodshare, like Green Thumbs Growing Kids have clearly shown the benefit of food programming, from snack programs to community gardens and community

kitchens. So why must they continue to spend valuable staff time writing grant proposal after grant proposal and organizing fundraisers? A government that was in fact serious about supporting local food and Ontario food organizations could easily provide funding to support community food hubs and community food programs across Ontario. The provincial government should be finding ways to facilitate and support these innovative programs, but so far I don't see anything about this in this legislation.

Our leader Andrea Horwath's original private member's bill correctly identified government bodies and public agencies as important agents of change. The MUSH sector—our municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals—represents a powerful economic tool that could be used to support our local farmers, and it could be used to create stronger markets for local Ontario-grown food.

I know that individuals are already doing this work. My former colleague at The Stop, Joshna Maharaj, has taken up the challenge of trying to revolutionize hospital food. She's working just down the street here at Sick Kids Hospital. And I think hers is a very sensible idea: It's to provide real food in hospitals. When people are sick, why not provide them with real, nutritious, Ontario-grown food? It makes good sense to me.

But why aren't hospitals around the province getting this kind of support to do this? I'm looking forward to the day when a Premier or a health minister or a Minister of Agriculture and Food picks up the phone to call people like Joshna or folks at The Stop or folks at Foodshare, and that minister thanks them for all the hard work that they've done and asks for their advice on how to invest public money into community food programs. These programs and organizations are sensible investments in promoting wellness, in making our communities healthier, and they could also support the local food economy in Ontario.

I want to take a moment to talk about schools, where kids are going to school hungry, where we are raising a generation of students who lack basic food literacy and food skills. I listened as my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane spoke. In fact, people around this House were listening closely, and it's a rare occurrence that that actually happens. I think because John Vanthof is a farmer and has actual experience growing food—that's actually something that most people in this city of Toronto don't understand and don't know how to do, and most people in this House don't understand.

Speaker, I think if you ask most kids where their food comes from today, they might think that it comes from the grocery store. It might come in plastic—not you kids. You guys know where it comes from; it comes from farms, but other kids—a generation of students, I think. A generation of students don't know how to cook, they don't know how to identify nutritious food and they don't know where their food comes from. This is a generation of kids who will grow up into adults and parents and who will lack basic food skills. I believe that our province

should be promoting what I would call an integrated food curriculum in every school, to teach children basic food skills and food literacy. This is something that Sustain Ontario has suggested and recommends. Any person that I talk to agrees with this; it makes sense to people.

This government should be supporting schools to establish new school gardens and kitchens as tools to teach students. We've all heard news—at least in Toronto—about schools that are selling their green spaces in our cities to raise funds, and to me this is unacceptable. Instead of selling off valuable school land, we should be transforming those buildings into vibrant community hubs where the green spaces can host community gardens and students can learn important skills taking care of a garden—and where students and community groups can access school kitchens as well.

While we're talking about schools, I think we should use this bill as an opportunity to get more healthy food into our schools. Let's talk about developing a universal student nutrition program. I would call it an apple-a-day program, because an apple a day would nourish Ontario students. It could nourish them with a locally grown piece of fruit or vegetable, and it would also support our Ontario farmers. A public program like this would do two things: Obviously, it would promote good health and eating habits in our schools, and it would also create significant buying power to support Ontario farms.

It's clear that too many kids are going to school hungry. Food bank use in Ontario is at an all-time high: Over 412,000 individuals every month cannot afford to feed themselves or their families, and this is absolutely unacceptable. Every person in Ontario should be able to afford to feed themselves and their families, and to do this without stigma or shame. This is why I believe that a universal student nutrition program would help kids access nutritious food in their schools in a way that doesn't create shame or stigma.

Speaker, I don't know if you've been into a school lately, but not every kid in school is bringing a lunch to school. Not every kid is able to participate in what people often call pizza lunch days. Some kids are able to purchase their snacks and lunches, while other kids don't have access. This makes sense to me: If we believe in a public education system and we believe in supporting it, why don't we make sure that kids have the proper nutritional support to be able to learn in their schools?

On top of this, we desperately need a social assistance system in Ontario that addresses the chronic food insecurity and health risks faced by welfare recipients in this province. This is something that this government desperately needs to take action on. It is hard to come into this House day after day as we debate bills that have been introduced and reintroduced, knowing all the while that there are people in this province who, by design, do not have enough resources to feed themselves or feed their families.

If there is any member in this House who could stand up and tell me honestly that you could live anywhere in this province as a single person for \$600 a month, I

would like to see them try that. I would say that to my Conservative colleagues and my Liberal colleagues: This is just not right. It's unacceptable, it's unjust, but it's also just unhealthy, for God's sake. People are getting sick because they can't afford a nutritious diet. Instead of just having these debates over and over again, I wish that this government would look at the recommendations of the social assistance review and, first and foremost, increase people's benefits so that they have access to good, healthy food, because poor diet and lack of access to nutritious food is a leading cause of poor health, and it's growing the health care costs for this province as well.

I believe that we all have an interest in seeing access to food improve in our province, and it's something that I would ask members in this House to build consensus with so that we can reach that vision.

1800

New Democrats will be supporting this bill, but we would like to see more. The people of this province are way ahead of this government in driving the market demand and benefits of local food. This bill, Bill 36, was an opportunity for the new Minister of Agriculture to come up with a local food act that would take concrete action to support people in this province to buy and eat local. This bill reads more like a statement of support, and that's simply not enough. A plan for a plan is not enough. New Democrats will continue to push for a strengthened Local Food Act that will get real results for rural, urban, young and old folks alike. We will work to get this bill into committee, where we hope MPPs in this assembly will listen to the good people of Ontario and put food first.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We are going to have late shows. Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

WASTE DIVERSION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given yesterday by the Minister of the Environment. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter.

The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: First of all, I want to start with the facts to set the record straight. Let's be honest; the Liberals have spread so much disinformation in the course of a couple of weeks that it would make, in fact, Bernie Madoff blush. I'll be going over a little history lesson that I hope the parliamentary assistant will take back to the Minister of the Environment. I know the minister has in fact been spending a little too much time in fantasyland as of late, so I want to make sure he's able to

rejoin the rest of us in the real world sooner rather than later.

It's now been more than 10 years since we introduced the Waste Diversion Act, which was designed to encourage people to reduce, reuse and recycle, as well as create a more stable funding formula for the blue box program. We took a bold step forward to help our municipal partners and to protect our environment, so I must say it's unfortunate to see that this act has been used by the Liberals to create eco taxes, massive government-mandated monopolies and excessive bureaucracy.

Let's skip ahead six years to 2008. The Liberal government, in its never-ending desire to squeeze more money out of Ontario taxpayers, included the province's first eco taxes under the Liberals' municipal hazardous or special waste program. This was a new concept at the time that the Liberals firmly defended, saying that eco taxes are just the cost of dealing with waste. In fact, the former Minister of the Environment encouraged businesses to charge eco taxes and put them on the price tag, saying that "it would clear it up and make the consumer aware." At the time, consumers only had to deal with eco taxes when they went to the store to buy a can of paint, get some batteries or put a new oil filter in their car. They didn't like the fees, but that didn't stop the Liberals from moving forward.

Next, the Liberals started the recycling program for electronics by establishing a regulation for waste electrical and electronic equipment in 2009. The Liberals' aim was to force consumers to pay for e-waste so they could subsidize their buddies in the recycling industry. It wasn't long until consumers started seeing eco taxes on their receipts for TVs, computers and iPods. They didn't like it, but guess what the Liberals decided to do? They kept moving forward together.

Next was the Liberals' tire tax program. Even though 90% of tires were being diverted from landfills under a free market system, the Liberals claimed Ontario needed a tire recycling program, without giving a valid reason. Since 2009, tire recycling costs have soared and the Liberals' bureaucracy has rapidly expanded. Just think that Ontario Tire Stewardship now has a budget of \$70 million.

Obviously, Ontarians were enraged with all the new eco taxes cropping up on their bills, but that didn't stop the Liberals. Clearly, the environment minister has been speaking out of both sides of his mouth. Hearing the environment minister talk about the need to now overhaul the Waste Diversion Act is quite rich, because it was his government that used this piece of legislation to create massive new bureaucracy and taxation powers by introducing three more recycling programs. If the Liberals thought the Waste Diversion Act was bad, why did they use it to create three more waste diversion programs? Why, after 10 years, did they not amend it? Ask yourself that: Why? Why did you bring in three new programs, and why didn't you amend it, then, after 10 years?

The environment minister should listen to the Ontario PC Party and return government to its role as a regulator and leave recycling to the free market.

I talked about the minister speaking out of both sides of his mouth. He has had no regard for consumers. The Liberals gave Stewardship Ontario the green light to slap eco taxes on thousands of new products in July 2010. This time, however, consumers have had enough. We all know the story well. The public outcry was so great that the Liberals decided to remove the eco taxes and dole out \$18 million to cover the costs of continuing the program—of course, without telling anyone.

I hope the parliamentary assistant is taking notes, because I really hope this is enough to snap the environment minister out of his trance. Despite all of this history, the environment minister still has the nerve to first pretend that he doesn't know what eco taxes are, then blame industry and then, after getting called out, point the finger at us.

I want to state this again for the record: There were no eco taxes under the former PC government. Eco taxes were created by the Liberal government in 2008 as part of their greenwashing agenda.

Clearly, the environment minister has been speaking out of both sides of his mouth—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The parliamentary assistant: You have five minutes to respond.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and have the opportunity to respond to the member's question.

We're here today to discuss the result of legislation passed into law by the Progressive Conservative Party in 2002. That was over 10 years ago, as you said. The Waste Diversion Act, 2002, put a system in place that allows private sector cartels to pass the fiscal responsibility for recycling products directly to consumers in the form of an industry-created eco fee.

This debate would be not be taking place if the Tories had just taken the time to properly consider the effect that their Waste Diversion Act would have on consumers and Ontario diversion rates.

They had the opportunity to create an act that could have done what its name implies: divert waste. Instead, the waste reduction act has stifled diversion in Ontario by calling for industry-run recycling cartels, as opposed to placing the onus and responsibility where it belongs: with the individual producer.

This could have been easily done by establishing a model requiring true individual producer responsibility. The Tory decision to hand responsibility for waste diversion to these cartels rather than to individual producers, where it belongs, is at the heart of the problem we are debating today.

Recycling a product at the end of its useful life is part of the cost of doing business, plain and simple, just like paying employees' wages, gassing up a delivery truck or writing the rent cheque. You don't see a rent surcharge

on your sales slip, and there's no reason you should see an eco fee on that slip either.

It has become abundantly clear to pretty much everyone who has had to deal with the Waste Diversion Act that it is a flawed piece of legislation and it must be replaced. Over the weekend, the head of the Ontario Waste Management Association, Rob Cook, put it quite simply: "There's no point in tinkering with the legislation because it is fundamentally flawed—the problems are rooted in the philosophy of the act."

Our intention is to replace the Waste Diversion Act with new and stronger legislation, legislation that will, if passed, increase diversion and protect consumers. The job of government will be to set clear environmental requirements to ensure that end-of-life products are recovered, reused and recycled, and kept out of the environment.

It is the producers that will ensure that innovative options for recycling, including product and packaging design, is achieved at least cost, and not have the costs automatically passed on to consumers. Lower recycling costs will be in the producers' best marketing interests and will mean more competitive prices.

Our approach, to engage the innovative creativity of individual private sector producers, will be contained in legislation that we intend to introduce later this session. It's time to shift our energies from merely managing waste to reducing it, while recovering the economic value of the waste stream and creating more recycling jobs.

I would like to finish by asking the member from Kitchener—Conestoga: Who was looking out for consumers when his party's flawed Waste Diversion Act was passed? The person who was charged with protecting consumers while this piece of legislation was passed—the Minister of Consumer Services at the time—was your leader, Tim Hudak, godfather of all eco fees. So if you're truly concerned about protecting consumers, look no further than to your own leader for the cause of your concern. He let it happen. Our government is going to fix the Tory mess. I'd invite the member across the aisle so that he can be a part of this and many other important reforms.

1810

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Haldimand—Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question yesterday by the Premier. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the Premier may respond for up to five minutes as well.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker; as you've noted, I did request a late-show debate because of my dissatisfaction with the answer given by the Premier—I'm very pleased to see the Premier here this evening—dissatisfaction concerning her commitment, her priority, for social service reform that I would notice on a nightly

basis on television just after your success in the leadership.

I note from the outset that my dissatisfaction results from the fact that the Premier, while making reference to the details that she said the minister would provide, failed to provide any details whatsoever. We were left with a number of old saws, "discussions," talking with the assurance that we're "moving forward"—we do hear that a lot—"preparing" and "committed to beginning to implement." "Committed to beginning to implement"—that's what you said, Premier, and again, what does that mean? The bottom line of my question is, when it comes to consolidation—the integration of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program to help get recipients jobs—people would like to know: Are you in or are you out on that one?

If you're in, how will that work, given that ODSP is currently funded 100% provincially and OW is at 86%. Where will the incentive be for municipal staff to find efficiencies with respect to the disability program within a consolidated system if they're not the ones footing the bill? If you're in, will there be public consultation? If you're in, will there be distinctions based on disability needs? Has that been thought out?

In my original question yesterday, I mentioned that our official opposition published a white paper, a paper to cut duplication and to cut the bureaucracy, again with a focus on helping to better enable people on disability to secure employment. I made mention of the all-party support at second reading for a private member's bill to foster employment and to permit disabled people to keep more of their own money—that was three years ago. I made mention of a private member's bill I introduced a month or so ago to cut waste through consolidation, while—ever-important—protecting the distinct needs of people with disabilities.

That's what we've done. We want to know what you've done and what you're going to do. The question remains: What happened? What's happening here? What happened to your priority to reform social assistance? Again, are you in, or are you out? I have a feeling that in a few minutes we may get an answer to that.

What of fostering employment through allowing recipients to keep more of their earned money? We described this in our white paper. It was in our private member's bill. We read that in the report by Lankin and Sheikh. Again, are you in or are you out when it comes to encouraging recipients to attain the dignity that accompanies a job? Will this be your priority?

At last count, the ODSP program caseload had increased by 49%—that's since 2003—approximately 400,000 people, while 475,000 children, women and men are on welfare. My question is, are these numbers current? Perhaps you could update the House on that trend—and it's obviously a trend in the wrong direction. We're looking at approaching something like a million people on social assistance in the province of Ontario.

I think of the 800 rules and regulations that force many case workers to spend 70% of their time dealing with these kinds of issues rather than helping out.

Social impact bonds—again, to encourage innovation in service delivery.

The concept of pay for success: Drummond talked about that one. Are you in on that one specifically, or are you out?

What's the holdup? We'd like to find out this evening just where we stand in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Premier has up to five minutes.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member opposite, because I think it bespeaks a level of common ground between us on this issue that I haven't heard before. I'm encouraged to hear the question. I'm encouraged to hear the remarks today about the concern around making our social assistance system more rational.

I would just say to the member opposite that, having been in this office for about nine weeks, my commitment to implementing the recommendations of the report has not diminished in any way. I'll go into some detail about that, but I am pleased that the question has been raised by the party opposite because I think that it suggests that perhaps the party opposite is getting ready to read the budget, look at what's in it and possibly support it, because it's obvious that there could be some common ground there.

The answer to the question is simple: I remain absolutely committed to reforming social assistance in Ontario, building on the advice of the Lankin-Sheikh report. That is my position; it has been my position. As I say, I have been in this office for a very short time. We are going to move ahead on that. As the member opposite knows, the report outlined 108 recommendations across six key themes that our government is looking at as we continue to build a stronger, healthier and fairer society by reducing poverty and increasing opportunities for the people of Ontario.

I just want to remark that this is the government that put in place legislation that requires us to report on poverty reduction. It's the first government that has had a Poverty Reduction Strategy. To even put poverty and the reduction of poverty on the legislative radar screen and to put in place a policy and legislation that hold the government accountable for reduction on indicators that are so important in people's lives is a huge step forward, I think, and it was our government that took that.

We know that social assistance as it exists today is not helping our most vulnerable people as it could be. That's how we know that there's more work to be done and that's why we undertook the first major review of social assistance in the province in over 20 years. It hadn't been done for 20 years, so we identified that as an issue and we acted on it by putting this review in place. We support the objectives described in the report. We're committed to the end goal of reducing poverty and increasing opportunities, and that's why the review remains a priority for the government. That's why I directed, pretty much im-

mediately when I came into the office, the secretary of cabinet to put together an implementation plan for the recommendations in the report, and that is the work that has been ongoing since I was in this position.

The Minister of Finance has said, in the runup to the budget, that we're preparing to implement recommendations from the report. That's why the Minister of Community and Social Services is talking to folks on the front line, because it's not a straightforward issue. Unravelling the tangle of rules and the jurisdictional issues is not straightforward. It's not simple. We need to make sure everyone can take part in that process, because we want everyone to take part in the economy. We want the systems that the government sets up not to get in the way of people taking part in the economy but in fact to support people having a job, getting a job and keeping that job.

That's what we're going to be working on. I hope the party opposite will work with us on that and support us on that front.

1820

Social assistance has been and will continue to be a priority for our government. In 2012, in our budget, we confirmed that the government remains committed to protecting the gains we've made in education, health care and social programs. We raised social assistance rates by 1% again last fall. That means that we've raised rates by a cumulative 14.9% since we took office in 2003. What that means is that this initiative will provide about \$55 million annually in additional benefits to families and individuals receiving social assistance. We're ensuring that the social assistance system is there for the people who need it.

Our social assistance programs, as you know, Madam Speaker, provide so much more than a cheque. They provide employment supports and skills training to people in order to help them reconnect with the labour force. They provide child care supports so people can work and earn their way back to a better life for their families. They provide job placements—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It goes so fast.

TOURISM

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kenora-Rainy River has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given yesterday by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. The member has up to five minutes, and the minister has up to five minutes to respond.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. Yesterday, I asked the Minister of Tourism what this government's strategy is for promoting tourism in the northwest, and I did not receive an answer. Nor did I receive an answer last year when I asked, on nearly two dozen occasions, for the minister to explain why the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Rainy River and Kenora

were closed while other centres at less busy border crossings remained open.

This has been a major concern because here we have an industry, tourism, that is essential to our northern economy, yet the minister in charge of protecting and promoting that industry has no knowledge, nor has he attempted to gather knowledge, of a very significant part of our province's economy.

Each year, tourism in the northwest contributes more than \$430 million into the provincial economy. With the downturn of our province's forest industry, many communities in the northwest became more and more reliant on tourism, whether it's cottagers and other visitors from Manitoba and other western provinces coming to Kenora and Lake of the Woods, or a huge influx of visitors from the midwest United States who visit hunting and fishing lodges scattered throughout more rural areas of the riding of Kenora-Rainy River.

While small in size, these mom-and-pop operators make significant contributions to our local economy. I know this first-hand because my parents operate Lac Seul Onaway Lodge, and each week they, just like dozens of similar operators, spend thousands of dollars on groceries for their guests, gas for their boats, and minnows and other supplies that help fuel our economy.

Despite the tourism industry in many ways being the backbone of our economy, these operations have not received the respect they deserve from a Ministry of Tourism that has taken no steps to alleviate the impacts of bad government policy on our region's operators. The minister and his department haven't taken the time to learn about the market area, and for much of the last year they justified closing the centres in my riding while keeping a centre in Pigeon River near Thunder Bay open by saying that it served a vital US tourism market.

I agree that American tourists are vital, but border crossing statistics show that Fort Frances and not Pigeon River is the primary entry point, at some points during the year serving almost twice as many visitors. In fact, the ministry's own statistics show that not only did the travel centre in Fort Frances continue to serve significantly more visitors, but the decline in visits in Pigeon River was much steeper in the last 10 years than for any of the three that they chose to close.

In fact, the minister's own parliamentary assistant, the member from Niagara Falls, even conceded as much in an interview with the Kenora Daily Miner newspaper last year. He said, "I've given that to the Minister (of Tourism Michael Chan)'s office chief of staff and said, 'let's take a look at this, let's talk to the bureaucrats who have given you the advice that they should be closed to see if they're taking into account the factors that Sarah mentioned.'" He said, "I'm prepared to take it forward. It's a valid series of concerns."

Instead, the ministry chose to close the centres in favour of its travel application for smart phones, where it once again failed to verify the effectiveness of this policy. Had they done the necessary groundwork, they would have found out that much of the northwest,

including most of the areas where tourist businesses are operating, are dead zones for this technology. Not only that, but this app, which was created by this government and heralded as being a bona fide replacement for the travel information centres, isn't unique, and it doesn't reflect the experiences that we are trying to market, such as nature, hunting and fishing.

Further, the biggest insult is that when you take the time to explore the app, you quickly discover that it completely fails to include any meaningful content for the northwest—this at a time when we are put at a competitive disadvantage by this government's HST, a tax that does not exist in northern Minnesota and Manitoba. And now this government is allowing billboards promoting outdoor recreation such as hunting and fishing in Manitoba—the business our operators in Kenora–Rainy River need—to be put up all across the northwest.

So I will ask again, what is this government's plan? The tourist operators in my region deserve answers, and the answers they have received to date are not supported by any facts.

Hon. Michael Chan: The member opposite talked about this issue about a year ago, and here we go, we're going to talk about the same issue. Last year, I think my PA responded to the question, but anyway, I'm going to try that one more time today.

Speaker, it is really a pleasure to rise today in the House and speak to our government's strategy to support tourism in northern Ontario. It is no secret that the tourism industry, the tourists, and the ways in which the market and consumers interact have changed. We found that Ontario tourism information centres throughout the province were experiencing declining demand. Not just in the year prior to closure or five years prior to closure, but for the past 10 years visitation decreased by 50% to 80% in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River. We saw people relying less on OTICs; we heard a call for greater accessibility in the information age; and we responded in recognition that marketing is much more than keeping underperforming OTICs. It requires a decisive approach. It demands innovation. It calls for us to think outside the box and leverage the tools necessary to bring tourists to our great province, and that includes northwestern Ontario and northern Ontario.

Our government deployed a robust tourism strategy in the north by providing necessary tourism infrastructure. We established the new regional tourism organization in region number 13, one that covers northern Ontario, with over \$18 million from 2010 to 2014, to effectively draw upon our tourism assets in the north, aggressively market northern Ontario to other centres, including Minnesota,

Toronto and Ottawa, and to drive the economy in our northern communities by increased visitation.

Speaker, allow me to remind you that before RTO 13 and our \$18-million support for northern Ontario, there were zero ministry dollars invested in a northern tourism strategy—not even a penny. But through RTO 13, our government increased tourism support to the north by \$18 million, and we did not stop there.

On top of that, we invested approximately \$5 million annually since 2003 for the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp.'s northern Ontario budget.

We supported festivals and events—over 130 events in northern Ontario—through Celebrate Ontario, employing thousands of Ontarians, many of them youth.

We introduced a tourism presence in the Ministry of Transportation's 23 new high-traffic highway service centres.

We continue to operate our travel information call centre, a toll-free service for tourists to access a travel counsellor.

We directed the OTMPC to develop a web-based portal to provide tourism information to visitors within our borders and beyond.

We, as a government, have been proud partners of tourism in the north:

- committing over \$68 million since 2003—that includes Kenora, Rainy River and Fort Frances;

- proactively profiling our tourism assets for visitors as they begin to plan their vacations;

- realigning our tourism marketing online services; and

- stepping up Ontario's 24/7 electronic and Internet-based travel marketing presence to meet consumers' travel research and booking preferences.

Speaker, when something is not working we must find new ways. We must change the course. We must adapt. Our market has changed, evolved and transformed. If tourism in northern Ontario is to be successful, it needs to compete with other jurisdictions.

As more and more travellers turn to the Internet to organize their trips, we are meeting the expectations of the competitive travel market by focusing our efforts on enhanced Internet-based services. Speaker, with new technologies, with new communication tools, with new access to information, we need a new way. We need a way forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1831.

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Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke–Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
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Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
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Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 17 April 2013

Mercredi 17 avril 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 April 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 avril 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SKIN CANCER PREVENTION ACT (TANNING BEDS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DU CANCER DE LA PEAU (LITS DE BRONZAGE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 19, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments / *Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à réglementer la vente et la commercialisation de services de bronzage et de traitements par rayonnement ultraviolet.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments. Before I begin, I would like to indicate that I will be sharing my time with my friend and colleague the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

To start off, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this bill over the past few years, starting with the member from Nickel Belt, who has brought it forward on several occasions and who has been relentless in her pursuit of safe tanning practices. I think she really is to be congratulated on this bill coming forward as a government bill.

I would also like to welcome Joanne Di Nardo and Florentina Stancu-Soare from the Canadian Cancer Society, who are in the gallery to be part of this debate and to listen to the comments here today. Thank you so much for joining us. The Canadian Cancer Society has been tirelessly advocating for the safe use of tanning beds for more than seven years. Their efforts deserve to be recognized and applauded, and I'm pleased that we are finally taking action to promote the safe and appropriate use of tanning beds in this province.

Bill 30 is a measure to respond to the mounting scientific evidence that points to the known dangers associated with using tanning beds and ultraviolet light treatments for youth. The World Health Organization has

identified tanning beds as a known carcinogen. Previously, tanning beds were considered a probable carcinogen, but in 2009, the World Health Organization upgraded tanning beds from probable carcinogens to known carcinogens, based on scientific evidence. This puts tanning bed use in the highest risk category along with asbestos and tobacco.

Bill 30, which will restrict access to indoor tanning equipment for youth under 18, is consistent with existing regulation on minors' access to other harmful substances, like tobacco. These restrictions recognize that youth are less likely to consider long-term health consequences of their actions, and this is especially relevant to indoor tanning because skin cancer resulting from indoor tanning equipment can take years to develop.

Mr. Speaker, I can certainly say from personal experience that in my youth we weren't aware of the dangers associated with excess tanning. I'm glad that we know this information now, and that we are taking these types of precautions. Dr. Samir Gupta, chair of the Ontario Medical Association's dermatology section, states, "The evidence has been unequivocal over the last several years that tanning bed radiation is linked to skin cancer," and it's the sun exposure you are getting in your early years that predicts skin cancer later on.

What does Bill 30 contain? In addition to restricting access to indoor tanning equipment for youth, Bill 30 has several other provisions. The bill requires tanning bed operators to request identification from people who appear to be under 25. This is certainly consistent with the laws on tobacco sales, which stipulate that tobacco cannot be sold to a person who appears to be under 25 unless that person produces identification indicating that they are of majority age.

Bill 30 would also ban advertising and marketing of tanning services or ultraviolet light treatment to youth under 18. Further, Bill 30 requires tanning bed owners to post signs about the ban and the health risks associated with the use of tanning beds. To give teeth to this regulation, Bill 30 authorizes inspectors to enforce these regulations. Tanning bed operators who fail to comply with the legislation will face fines. Fines are set at \$5,000 for individuals and \$25,000 for corporations.

Finally, Bill 30 requires that all tanning bed operators provide the local medical officer of health with the name, business address and telephone number where the tanning service or ultraviolet light treatment is being sold. The province needs a registry of tanning equipment operators so that, if passed, this legislation can be overseen and enforced.

Bill 30 comes in response to studies by health researchers that have made the risks of using tanning beds abundantly clear, especially for youth. The World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer reports that the risk of skin cancer, particularly melanoma, increases by 75% when tanning beds are used prior to the age of 35. Researchers have found that the risk of developing melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, increases by 1.8% with each additional tanning session per year.

This is worrying, because we are witnessing the impact on the health of Ontarians. The incidence of melanoma in Ontario has been rising in youth and adults aged 15 to 34. At the same time as we see increasing cases of melanoma among youth, we see a rise in the use of tanning beds. A study conducted on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society showed that between 2006 and 2012 the use of tanning beds more than doubled, from 7% to 16%, among Ontario students in grades 11 and 12. Skin cancer is now the most common cancer in Ontario. It accounts for one third of all cancer diagnoses in the province.

The research is clear that the main environmental risk factor for skin cancer is exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun and also through indoor tanning. It's important to clarify that exposure to ultraviolet rays is linked to skin cancer whether the ultraviolet rays are from the sun or from tanning beds. In fact, UV rays from tanning beds can be even more harmful than UV rays from the sun. I don't think this is something that people really recognize, Mr. Speaker.

Studies of modern tanning equipment have found ultraviolet emissions equal to or exceeding those of the midday sun in the Mediterranean. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, some tanning beds can expose you to five times more radiation than the sun; again, a pretty startling statistic. However, many youth have false conceptions about tanning beds. According to an Ipsos Reid poll, 12% of youth believe that using tanning beds or lamps actually helps prevent some kinds of cancer and nearly 20% say they use a tanning bed or lamp because it increases their vitamin D levels. In reality, there are many other ways of getting vitamin D without the risks that accompany the use of tanning beds; for instance, through safe exposure to the sun or by taking supplements such as liquid vitamin D drops.

So why do youth use tanning beds? According to a study by the Canadian Cancer Society, the main reasons students give for using tanning beds are (1) feeling that they look better with a tan; (2) getting a tan before going on vacation or for special occasions—I think it's probably around prom season that we see a particular use, or the highest use, of tanning beds and ultraviolet light treatments; and (3) because of peer influence.

0910

A Toronto health survey tells us that in Toronto, indoor tanning use is highest among young white women aged 18 to 34, 44% of whom have used indoor tanning at some point in their lives, and we know that more than one in five people start using tanning equipment when they are

under 18 years of age. So a ban, I would say, in this case is certainly appropriate.

To look out for our youth's best interests, we must appropriately address the products and services that put youth at considerable risk. I would say, as Progressive Conservatives, that we don't necessarily believe in bans just for the sake of it, but in this case, there's certainly significant scientific evidence that directly links the use of indoor tanning and some forms of skin cancer. What we're talking about here when we're talking about youth as opposed to adults is that there is certainly evidence that links skin cancer—specifically, linking melanoma—to tanning beds. It undeniably points to a need to regulate tanning bed use for youth under 18.

The state recognizes that youth may be less likely to consider the long-term health consequences of their actions, and there are provisions in law which bind the state to protect youth and others who are not capable of caring for themselves or making these types of decisions for themselves. In law, the *parens patriae* power gives the state the power to make decisions concerning people who are not able to take care of themselves or to make those kinds of decisions on their own. In the case of *Rutherford v. Ontario*, the court found that “the *parens patriae* jurisdiction is ... founded on necessity, namely the need to act for the protection of those who cannot care for themselves. The courts have frequently stated that it is to be exercised in the best interest of the protected person....”

We see other examples of this—for example, in the work of the children's aid society. The children's aid society has the power to intervene in families to prevent child abuse and neglect. Similarly, when there is a known danger to youth, as is the case with tanning beds and UV radiation, it is necessary from time to time for the state to step in to keep our youth healthy, and that's certainly what Bill 30 is aimed at doing.

I would like to speak just briefly about one individual person's contact with tanning beds and her personal health situation that arose as a result of that. One brave young woman who has appeared in this Legislature before—her name is Kate Neale—used to be a frequent tanner. She is now a Canadian Cancer Society volunteer and a fantastic advocate against youth using tanning beds. Kate started using tanning beds when she was a 16-year-old with light and sunburn-prone skin. At first, Kate tanned two or three times a week but soon started doing 12 to 16 minutes in the highest UVB-pressure bed up to 16 times a month. The maximum recommended time on this bed is 12 minutes, but the salon allowed customers to tan in this bed for up to 30 minutes.

After graduating from high school, Kate applied to work at a tanning salon. Her contract stipulated that in return for maintaining a tanned appearance, she would get 12 indoor tanning sessions and one spray tan free each month.

In May 2011, at age 21, Kate was diagnosed with melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. Kate's surgeon told her that she was the youngest person he had ever treated for melanoma. Removing the melanoma has left a

six-inch scar on Kate's stomach. Since her first surgery, she has had to undergo biopsies for skin lesions on her right breast, leg and arm. Despite her experience, Kate says she is still using self-tanners, or self-tanning spray or lotion, because she still wants to maintain that tanned appearance, but she's still fighting skin cancer. New spots appear on her skin regularly. Currently, Kate is waiting for the results of another biopsy, which left her with 22 stitches on her left breast, and a total of eight spots have been removed since June, one being precancerous.

Kate's experience has led her to educate teenagers about the dangers of indoor tanning and encourage them to host tan-free proms. She's also a strong advocate for the need to regulate the indoor tanning industry. Kate says, "If politicians need a reason to take action on this issue, they should just take a look at my story to see how tanning at a young age has impacted my life." I hope that any young people who may be either listening to this or may hear about it will take these words to heart, because of course all young people think that this sort of thing will never happen to them, but Kate's experience certainly shows that it can happen to a young person. I thank her very much for her bravery in coming forward with her story.

Unfortunately, her story is powerful but all too common. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in Ontario. In 2011, an estimated 36,160 new cases of skin cancer were diagnosed in the province, of which 2,500, or 7%, were melanoma. Melanoma caused an estimated 420 deaths in Ontario in 2011.

Tanning bed use is undeniably costly to individuals' personal health and well-being, but of course the financial cost to our health system is also extremely high. I'd just like to address that for a few moments. Cancer Care Ontario estimated that the cost of skin cancer in this province would exceed \$344 million in 2011. This includes direct costs like the cost of treatment, as well as indirect costs of morbidity and premature mortality. This is a significant burden on our already strained health care system.

The good news is that this is a cost which we can take steps to minimize. Skin cancer is largely a preventable disease. Promoting the safe use of tanning beds is one way to minimize the risk of skin cancer, and this relates fundamentally to our Progressive Conservative vision for health care. Our vision for health care is based on health promotion and health prevention, rather than our old model of health care which is reactive, based on acute episodes of illness and only responds in times of crisis. What we really want to do in our health care system is transition to a model which is based on promotion and prevention, which is proactive and which exposes people to knowledge about how to prevent these types of diseases in the future and to maintain high-quality health care. Bill 30 provides a way to improve the health of Ontarians and takes steps towards reducing the burden on our health care system.

The current standard for the indoor tanning industry is self-regulation, but this has proven to be insufficient. The

Joint Canadian Tanning Association, or JCTA, has developed guidelines for tanning facilities. These voluntary guidelines include regulations about operator training and certification, restriction of equipment control to certified operators and requirements for written parental consent for clients under age 18, but these industry guidelines are not enforced, and the JCTA does not represent all indoor tanning facilities.

At present, studies show that indoor tanning facilities provide only limited information to their customers about the health risks of indoor tanning. Many people, including youth and fair-skinned individuals, continue to be at risk of skin cancer from indoor tanning. This was proven in 2007, when Youthography conducted a compliance audit for the Ontario branch of the Canadian Cancer Society. Research assistants, including youth as young as 16, were trained to act as indoor tanning customers. The study looked at 79 tanning bed salons in Toronto and found that the majority, in fact 83% of those facilities, did not provide information about the skin cancer risks associated with indoor tanning bed use. Moreover, 60% of facilities did not ask for the age of the young researchers. This study suggests a failure of the current self-regulatory model.

Moreover, in 2011, Toronto Public Health conducted a review of the websites of indoor tanning facilities in Toronto to determine whether their practices were consistent with Health Canada's guidelines for tanning salon owners, operators and users. Websites are considered an important source of information for indoor tanning customers looking for a local business. Toronto Public Health found that only one third of the websites for tanning salons provide information about the health risks of indoor tanning to the consumer and to the public; only two websites provided information about the increased risks of skin cancer; and none of the websites advised young people not to use tanning equipment.

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The Toronto Public Health website analysis also examined the marketing and advertising messages used to promote indoor tanning services. The most common theme—a claim made on 43% of the websites—was that indoor tanning is "safe" compared to tanning outdoors. A third of the websites identified benefits related to vitamin D production, and just under 20% of websites promoted health benefits such as improving mental health, preventing chronic disease, decreasing risk of cancer, and improving skin conditions. It's no wonder that youth have a number of misconceptions about the use of indoor tanning beds. These misleading promotional messages need to be addressed so that youth and all Ontarians are properly aware of the actual risks of indoor tanning.

These studies lead us to conclude that industry self-regulation is not effective and that we need to do more. The Joint Canadian Tanning Association once advocated for requiring parental consent for youth to use tanning beds rather than a ban against youth accessing tanning equipment. But the JCTA does not oppose age-based restrictions in Bill 30, and the JCTA recognizes the im-

portance of regulating the indoor tanning sector. Further, the JCTA has pointed to several areas where Bill 30 could be strengthened, and this advice is certainly most welcome. The JCTA recognizes that if we are going to regulate the use of tanning beds available to youth, we need to do so effectively.

Bill 30 falls short because it does not include a ban on self-service coin-operated machines. Although self-service tanning is not yet common in Canada, it is common in England and a number of other international jurisdictions, and it is becoming increasingly common in Ontario. Coin- or swipe-card-operated franchises offer low-cost, unsupervised tanning services. These self-serve tanning beds lack professional control over UV light exposure, putting clients of all ages at risk and giving youth access to unsupervised tanning. Controlling coin-operated machines is important because we do not want to ban teens from using tanning equipment only to have them find more dangerous, even less supervised, methods of tanning. Converting coin-operated tanning beds to manual control would come at a low cost—under \$20—according to the JCTA and would help close the loopholes in Bill 30.

Bill 30 also fails to clearly differentiate between UV tanning and spray tanning. It's important to protect the salon's ability to provide spray tanning to youth, since this plays a part in preventing the use of UV tanning in providing an alternative to youth who want to maintain that tanned appearance. We need to ensure that the proposed legislation is clarified to avoid any misinterpretation or unnecessary cost to small business while still promoting the best protection for our youth.

The JCTA's recommendations to enhance Bill 30 make them one of the many groups that support the regulation of the indoor tanning sector. Many health promotion groups have called for creating guidelines on access to tanning beds for youth in addition to the Canadian Cancer Society. These groups include the Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Dermatology Association, Canadian Paediatric Society, Ontario Medical Association, Association of Local Public Health Agencies, and, of course, the Canadian Cancer Society. These groups recommend that children and youth under 18 years old not be allowed to use tanning equipment.

The public is also in favour of indoor tanning regulation in Ontario. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I've received thousands of letters from people across this province voicing their support for establishing guidelines on tanning bed use. A lot of these letters have come from youth themselves, which I think is particularly appropriate and certainly indicates that youth are getting the message here. A 2011 Ipsos Reid poll of 822 Ontarians commissioned by the cancer society found that 80% of adults support legislation to regulate the tanning industry, and 83% support a ban on indoor tanning for youth under 18 years old.

Six provinces have already either introduced or implemented legislation restricting tanning bed use by youth, ranging from outright bans in Quebec, British Columbia,

Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland to mandatory parental consent in Manitoba.

In February, the federal government announced that it would toughen existing health warnings about the dangers of tanning beds. The changes would force operators to display a health warning label reading, "Not recommended for use by those under 18 years of age," and "Tanning equipment can cause cancer," as well as a list of other health risks associated with tanning.

In the federal House of Commons, Conservative MP James Bezan has tabled two bills pushing for stronger regulation on labelling and on using tanning equipment. MP Bezan stated, "My wife is a melanoma cancer survivor, and both of us used tanning beds. This is why I am fighting one of the most deadly but also most preventable cancers." He urges all provinces to follow in British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Quebec's footsteps by banning youth from using tanning equipment.

While Health Canada regulates the sale, lease and import of tanning beds, the regulation of tanning bed use in commercial establishments, including age restrictions, falls under provincial jurisdiction, and so this House is faced with the responsibility of ensuring that tanning equipment is used safely.

Outside of Canada, many other jurisdictions have taken steps towards reducing the use of tanning equipment. In the United States, California and Vermont have banned youth under 18 from using tanning beds, and more than 30 states currently restrict minors' access to indoor tanning, either through parental consent or setting an age limit.

A number of countries also have legislation restricting or prohibiting tanning bed use by youth, including Britain, Iceland, Finland, Portugal, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Sweden and France. Closer to home, in Mississauga and Oakville, there are bylaws that restrict access to tanning equipment for youth under age 18.

Restricting minors' access to tanning equipment at the provincial level, with penalties for operators who fail to comply, will help protect all Ontario youth from the health risks of indoor tanning. Provisions such as requiring tanning bed owners to post signs about the health risks of tanning bed use will promote informed decision-making for all tanning bed users across the province.

We strongly believe in the importance of keeping our youth healthy, educating them and encouraging them to make good decisions. We look forward to moving ahead with this bill in the best interests of our youth, to work towards creating a healthy Ontario.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that we do support this bill entirely. We do believe that there are some suggestions that can be made, as we indicated, suggestions that have been made by the Joint Canadian Tanning Association and by others that will strengthen this bill, such as including the ban on self-operated or coin-operated tanning beds and by not including spray tanning in this ban, which I hope we'll have the opportunity to discuss in greater detail in committee.

I thank you very much for the opportunity to address some of these issues this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. It's always a pleasure to follow my esteemed colleague the health critic for the PC Party.

It's a pleasure to stand here today and to give my thoughts on this bill. I just want to review for the people listening at home: "The bill prohibits selling, offering for sale, or providing for consideration tanning services or ultraviolet light treatments to persons under 18. Directing the advertising or marketing of such services or treatments to persons under 18 is also prohibited. Persons who sell such services or treatments are required to notify their local medical officer of health that they intend to do so and to post signs in their businesses about the health effects of the services or treatments.

"Inspection powers, offences, and regulation-making powers are provided for."

Speaker, because we know that tanning beds do cause cancer, I believe we have an absolute duty to advertise these known dangers to teens. Particularly in my role as deputy health critic, it's a concern that I take very seriously. We shouldn't ever turn our heads from something that is going to do harm to someone who may not be at a point in life that they can make their own decisions.

There's a lot of cachet out there on people's looks. A tan, for many people, is something that they take very seriously, so they'll go to these tanning beds without understanding that these are carcinogens. I think we have to do our utmost to ensure that the youth of today understand that. It's our job, as legislators in this hallowed hall, to make sure that we're taking those steps so that someone doesn't needlessly die from that.

Skin cancer, as many of the leading organizations tell us, is the most common type of cancer, but it's also the most preventable. It's something that I think, again—with good education, with good communication, with us taking that step in the House today, we can prevent these types of cancers.

That is very significant, not only for the life of the individual but also for the resources of our health care system. If people end up with cancer, they have to go through that painful, arduous and very costly treatment system, and that, again, prevents other people from going through our system. So why would we not, in good conscience, do things to prevent that?

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My background originally was as a recreation director. I'm a big believer in: Let's keep people active; let's keep people fit, as opposed to trying to fix them once they've gone down a different path. I don't see this bill as a whole lot different. If we can prevent someone from getting cancer, it's good for the individual, obviously, but it's also good for our system and it's certainly good for our health care system. Through education and improved regulation, we can save lives.

I'd like to just add here that certainly the federal government is also taking a stand on this. They announced in February that they're proposing nationwide changes that

would actually require tanning beds in all provinces to display a health warning label to remind Canadians of those risks. The proposed changes would require all tanning beds to display a health warning decal with the following messages, for example: "Not recommended for use by those under 18 years of age," "Tanning equipment can cause cancer," as well as a bolded list of other health risks associated with tanning. The feds are doing it; other provinces are doing it. It only makes sense that, as one of the leading provinces in our great nation, we should be standing behind that 100%.

The local cancer society volunteers have been in to see me numerous times about this, and I'm proud to be able to bring their message to Queen's Park, along with our guests in the gallery today who are out there working feverishly in our communities across this great province to try to bring this bill in again. I think everybody has the common goal to ensure that our teens are not put in a position that they may not know the dangers; they may not understand the consequences that may happen to them many, many years down the road in life, and therefore we have to do that.

Even the World Health Organization—in July 2009, their agency for research on cancer monograph working group declared that the use of UV-emitting tanning devices is carcinogenic to humans. That word alone—if any of us have had family or friends suffer from cancer—I've unfortunately lost a sister to cancer. My mom is a breast cancer survivor; I have a sister who is a breast cancer survivor. I can only tell you, from watching them go through what they've had to—we have a great colleague in the House who's actually valiantly fighting right now. Any form of cancer is something that I think we always have to be taking the forefront on. We have to be leading the charge and putting legislation in place to prevent that.

This new carcinogenic classification places tanning beds alongside tobacco smoke, asbestos and uranium as known cancer-causing agents. It would be unfathomable that we would stand in this House and not do something, when you look at those three things that are standing beside—who would allow their child to go into a room filled with uranium or asbestos without some kind of precaution and being able to educate them and ensure that they know that?

The World Health Organization reports that the risk of melanoma is increased by 75% when use of tanning devices starts at age 30 or younger. Again, we really have to take that precaution. We have to ensure that this bill that has been introduced by the minister is something that we take very seriously, that we take very diligently, and we spend the time to do this right. We have to put some legislation in place that's going to ensure that there are vehicles, and there needs to be some accountability and some enforcement of that if we're going to do this well.

Facts from the Canadian Dermatology Association suggest that melanoma is now the eighth most frequent cancer in Canada, affecting 5,500 people in 2011 and causing 950 deaths. Again, if we can prevent even one death, it's worth the time and the effort that we put into

putting a bill like this on the floor. We need to get it voted on; we need to get it moving through the House as quickly as possible.

The Canadian Dermatology Association goes on to tell me that melanoma is the most deadly form of skin cancer. Excessive ultraviolet exposure from the sun and sun beds plays a leading role in the development of melanoma and is the most preventable cause of the disease. Again, it just makes common sense. I'm hopeful that all three parties will see it from that perspective and we can bring this bill as quickly as we can.

Looking at all cancers found in the 15-to-29 age group, melanoma was the third most common cancer in young women and represented 11% of new cases. There's growing evidence that exposure to ultraviolet radiation through the use of tanning beds and sun lamps increases the risk of developing melanoma, especially if exposure begins in adolescence or young adulthood.

Once you've been granted adulthood, then I guess the reality is, Speaker—what we would suggest, or what I would certainly suggest to individuals, is that you have the right to make your own choices. But I think it's our duty protect our youth. It's our duty to protect those young pages in front of you so that they live a long, prosperous and happy life, Speaker. This type of legislation will help us to be able to do that.

Some general observations, when I was doing some research on this: the general public is aware that tanning outside is harmful. If you spend too much time in the sun, you get a burn, and that burn, over long periods of time, is purported to be one of the causes of establishing cancer. But I think what they often mistakenly believe is that tanning in a salon is a safer alternative to sunbathing, and that's absolutely not the truth, particularly in those younger years. I think anything you do should be done in moderation, whether you're outside sunbathing—and if you're an adult and want to go to these tanning beds, again, I think you have to do all of this with the knowledge that there could be some concerns down the road.

We're not opposed to the industry. The industry, I think, is about a billion-dollar industry, and there are about 3,000 tanning salons across the country. As an adult, again, like most things in life, we're not here to tell you how to live your life; we're not here to tell you what you can and can't or should or shouldn't do. We may offer some helpful suggestions, but I think when it comes to our youth, I'm definitely prepared to stand in this House and take a stand. I'm prepared to take a stand and say that absolutely my job is to protect those youth and ensure that we're putting legislation in place that will be there as a protection.

We need to work with the industry so that they again are onboard with this and that they're being proactive in their promotion. And it only makes sense for them. Again, why would any business knowingly do harm to their future customers? I think we can look out and expect that they're going to support this: the ban for the younger children.

We have to understand that certainly the tanning bed industry is there. Our forum would be to go and consult

with the industry to make sure they understand why we're doing this and ensure that we have their feedback, like anything we do. I think if you do that in a balanced, progressive manner and do it ahead of time and you have that opportunity for consultation, then you can put good legislation in place.

I think my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa has stated again that our job—and particularly in both of our capacities as critics of health care—is that we have to always be on the lookout for things that are going to put any harm in the way of the people who we represent across this great province. It's our fiduciary responsibility to ensure that we're taking action when necessary.

We have groups like the Canadian Cancer Society who are out there working very diligently. They're bringing the message door to door. They're bringing it to our offices. They're bringing it to receptions here at Queen's Park. We, as legislators, I think owe it to them to hear them out and understand where the concerns are.

This has huge, huge, huge economic impacts. If someone gets cancer and goes through the process, there's hospitalization, there are very costly drugs, there's the use of the resources of the cancer technologists, the doctors. Speaker, it's one of those things, again, that, to me, we just always have to be looking at in a proactive sense. We need to ensure that people are not going to be put in harm's way unknowingly.

One of the articles that I had as research yesterday was talking about how on a cigarette package, for many years, those cigarette packages—people smoked and smoked and smoked, and they never, ever looked. Now, they put on a pretty graphic picture on there to be able to say, "Absolutely, think about what you're doing before you open this thing and start doing what you're going to do with those cigarettes." I think this is very similar. It is a carcinogen, very similar to the cigarettes; it's a carcinogen similar to asbestos. I think we need to ensure that there are definitely rules in place, that there's communication, that there are tools and that there are resources.

I think the biggest thing here, Speaker, is that education and communication. I think we have to make sure we are making our youth aware. Equally importantly, we need to make sure that the parents of those youth are aware, because sometimes, like the Internet, kids can go on and they can do their own research, and people may not even know about that.

I think what we need to understand is that this is a very easy thing to implement. The execution will take some work and will take some money to ensure that we roll that out and the industry rolls it out. But I think there's certainly lots of opportunity to be able to do that, Speaker, and if we just come together as the three parties on the bill, I think it's what people send us to Queen's Park to do: to work on these collaborative types of bills that are going to be for the greater good, the benefit of all Ontarians, and I can't fathom that we wouldn't do that. One of my questions, I guess, is: Why hasn't it already been done? Better late than never. At least it's here today, and we've had the opportunity to speak to this.

Again, I'd like to welcome Joanne Di Nardo and Florentina Stancu-Soare from the Canadian Cancer Society, who are here, and thank them for all of their work and your colleagues' work across this great province. There are volunteers who are there giving their heart and soul. As I say, I've been lobbied three times by the one volunteer in my riding, and she is a wonderful lady. The cancer society office actually, ironically, now has just moved into the office building that my constituency office is in, so I get lobbied on an almost daily basis to some degree. But I just have to reach out to those volunteers who are out giving their time, their energy and, in many cases, their resources to ensure that we as politicians are hearing it. But they're also out in the community. They're running events; they're running promotional ads. They're doing everything they can in their power. My hat is off to all of your volunteers of the Canadian Cancer Society for all you do.

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As I say, I had a pretty close touch with cancer in my own family. Terry Fox is one of my biggest idols. I just can't fathom every day getting up and running 26 miles on one leg—with that heart, that determination, that soul—in the weather conditions, uphill, in any weather you can think of, day after day after day. I'm actually a little bit guilty. I should be out running at least once in my lifetime; he did it every single day, and he did that so that others wouldn't have to suffer like he had to do. He'll always be inspiring to me, and as cancer impacts all of us in our daily lives, our family members, our friends, there's not one person, I think, who hasn't been affected.

Certainly, when I saw this legislation coming before me, it wasn't very hard to make a determination that I would stand up proudly and support the need for this legislation. Because anything we can do to prevent cancers—and that's the key here, I think, is that whole prevention, the side of saying, "Let's not go down that road and try to make you better at the end of the day; let's ensure that we're going to do the things that we can up front and be proactive," which saves our system, but more importantly saves that family and that individual from going through that.

Bill 30 is a measured response to the mounting scientific evidence that points to the known dangers associated with using tanning beds and ultraviolet light treatment for youth. I think what we're trying to really say here is that some people will come out and they may feel they have a right, they may feel that, "Well, you can't tell me what I can do and can't do." But there are many things with our youth that—again, I don't think we allow youth to drink alcohol before a certain age; we don't allow youth to vote until they are 19. So why would we allow them to go to a tanning bed, something that could drastically impact their health in later years? I get the argument and I have had some people push back and say, "You know, you have to stay out of this stuff. Just let people do their own thing." Well, yes, that's true to a point.

I have a 15-year-old and an 18-year-old son, and they're my biggest treasures. I want them to be here

down the road. So I'm a bit of a hard knuckle, maybe, to them and I won't allow them to go to something like tanning, particularly when they're under my roof and under the age of 18. That's just one of my rules. I won't allow them to smoke, particularly because of those instances of cancer in my family.

In this case I will take a stand and we will say yes, we would be prepared to support that, because it really is putting youth at risk if we don't do that. I couldn't walk home and look myself in the mirror if I walked away from this and didn't do it, Speaker.

As I've mentioned a couple of times, and I think Christine has as well, this is going to restrict it to indoor tanning equipment for youth under 18. It's consistent with existing regulation and minors' access to other harmful substances like tobacco. These restrictions recognize that youth are less likely to consider—you know, we've all been there, Speaker. I think you still think at times that you're a youthful man. I saw you on the ice the other night when you were trying to referee our Legiskaters and Dentonators game—and I'm proud to say the Legiskaters did win that game. We appreciate the Ontario Dental Association, and particularly Maggie Head for her organizational efforts in that game. You were trying to relive and recapture a bit of your youth there, Speaker.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: He's been very trying, at times.

Mr. Bill Walker: He's been very trying, at times.

Getting back to this point, we have to restrict this; we have to always be putting our youth—they are our future. That's a bit of a cliché that gets used maybe too often in some cases, but they truly are our leaders. They're our next generation. They're why we are here. I won't speak for all of my 107 colleagues in this House, but it's certainly why I came here: to make a better future for my kids, and hopefully someday grandkids, down the road. Something like this certainly allows us to take a step in that direction and have a small influence on at least one person's life, if we do it well.

Dr. Samir Gupta, chair of the Ontario Medical Association's dermatology section, states: "The evidence has been unequivocal over the last several years that tanning bed radiation is linked to skin cancer." So again, we have the medical background, we have the proof that this really does cause challenges, so why would we not step up and do the right thing here? "It's the sun exposure you're getting in your early years that predicts skin cancer later on."

So again, a bit of a shout-out to those youth and to those parents who are listening or who are in the gallery with us today: Be educating your kids at that young age. Don't allow your children at 6, 7, 8, 10, 12 years of age be out in the sun getting baked and fried. I have the odd occasion to go to a beach—I have beautiful beaches in the riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound; Sauble Beach is one of the nicest seven-mile stretches of beach you're going to find in the world. People come from all over the world to sun themselves there. You walk down the streets sometimes, when I'm out visiting my constituents in the beach area, and they're just as red as a beetroot. It

doesn't take long anymore. On certain days in the height of summer, 10 minutes, or maybe 15 minutes at the very most, without the proper suntan lotion on, and you can be fried. That, over a prolonged period, if you keep doing it—yes, you're going to look nice and crystal bronze at the end of the summer, maybe, but boy, what's your health worth?

Looking good when you're 16 or 15 or 10 or 12, as opposed to having to go through—I think it might be helpful if we took all of our youth through a cancer ward and let them see what happens to someone who thought they were invincible in their youth. We all go through that. I'm certainly not standing here and saying I didn't make mistakes—and still don't make lots of mistakes, in fact. But when it comes to my health care, one of the things I've certainly seen, working close to a hospital in my former capacity as the executive director of a hospital foundation, is how much our health really means and how much people don't really value it until they're sick. Many people would come into my office to make a donation because a doctor was, in many cases, able to help them, or a nurse or a nurse practitioner. They say, "You know, I just wish I had used more common sense when I was younger. I really just wish I hadn't gone down that road, because now I see how much it's costing. I see the drain and the emotional stress I'm putting on my family to go through this type of illness." It's just one of those ones that, to me—an ounce of prevention is a pound of cure. I really think we have to be thinking that with this type of thing.

Bill 30 is going to require tanning bed operators to request identification from people who appear to be under 25. I think that's a pretty reasonable request. Some people, in their vanity, still like to go out to certain establishments, and I think they actually take it as a bit of an identification tag if they get asked for ID. So in this case I don't think there's anything wrong, again. I'd rather err, if I was the person, in asking a 26-year-old, even, or a 30-year-old, maybe, in some cases. I think they'll take that as a good-natured thing and they'll know that I'm doing it not because I'm trying to be the enforcer but because I truly, honestly care and want to do something with you.

Bill 30 is consistent with the laws in tobacco sales, which again stipulate that tobacco cannot be sold to a person who appears to be under 25 unless that person produces identification identifying and indicating they are of majority age.

It would also ban advertising and marketing of tanning salons. Again, one of the biggest things I think, particularly with this explosion of our social Internet sites, Facebook—social media is what I was trying to say—is where people can advertise, people can blog, people can put all kinds of things, and a lot of companies today can spend inordinate amounts of money trying to entice. They make all the ads look catchy and sexy and they all use the glitz and the glamour, the funky clothes, the roller skating, to entice those youth, to say, "This could be you." They take that model picture and put it up there, and that's

very tough, as someone who's not really an old, old guy—getting up there in years, but not quite as much as my colleague here. But we have to do our part, because there are people out there who will try to utilize that advertising and marketing domain to entice a young person who hasn't given thought, who is in a different place in life, who is just thinking about the fun and, "I'm going to live forever." We need to do things to make sure there's an equal balance there, Speaker.

It also requires tanning bed owners to post signs about the ban and the health risks associated. So again, a little more reality. When I walk in—back to those cigarette packages that have the warning label on and that picture that certainly stops me in my tracks. I've never been a smoker. My brothers are quite a bit older than I, and they gave me a cigarette. I unfortunately was ill. They gave me a pipe five minutes later and I was unfortunately ill. And five minutes later they gave me a cigar and I was unfortunately ill. The only other time: When my god-daughter was born, my best buddy said, "You've got to have a cigar to celebrate her life." I took one little puff. I didn't inhale, because I knew what was going to happen: I was sick all over. That was the end of my smoking career. And I'm proud to say that.

There's not a lot of people that I've been out with in that generation who didn't at least try it. Some of them, unfortunately, became addicted to cigarettes, and I worry about them, because I think that cancer thing is going to nip them at some point down the road. Every day I try to influence them to stop. Certainly my family members, now that I've lost a sister and have two other family members who have cancer—I try every day to do that. This is just one of those other opportunities for me to do my little part in some little way.

If one of our pages today, from listening to this, chooses not to go into a tanning salon until they're at least over 25 or 30, if one of them chooses not to smoke cigarettes or a pipe or any of the other horrible things that are out there at their beck and call, then I've done my little part and I'll go home happy at the end of the day saying I've at least made a difference. To the pages: Please take this very seriously. It is something that you have to be very cognizant of. Talk to your friends. If you know friends who are going, get them some education. Walk with them, show them, go to a tanning salon and see if this information is there. Go to your cancer society and get the information to stop them from there.

0950

To give teeth to this regulation, Bill 30 authorizes inspectors to enforce these requirements. There are going to be fines in place of \$5,000 for individuals and \$25,000 for corporations, so this is no small matter, and if there are, as there many times are—there can be a bad apple in an industry—if they're out doing this and they're continuing to let people under 18 in, then we have to put some teeth in that will prohibit that and at least act as a deterrent for those people.

Finally, Bill 30 requires that all tanning bed operators provide the local medical officer of health with the name,

business address and telephone number where the tanning service or ultraviolet treatment is sold. At least now, we're going to know where these things are. We're going to know each establishment so they can be inspected properly. We can ensure that they're following the regulations and, if not, like anything that has well served the people of Ontario, there needs to be accountability. The rules are the rules. We treat everyone the same way. If you're not willing to abide by the rules, then there need to be some consequences. That's a message that, again, I follow in life. We all have choices. We all have the ability to make choices, but there are consequences to each of the decisions we make. In cases like this, when you're taking advantage of, particularly, a youth, I think we need some teeth in the regulation to be able to go in. They're thus trying to make money; well, this is a good way to deter it: by putting some pretty hefty fines.

There will be a registry of tanning equipment operators so that, if passed, this legislation can be overseen and enforced. As I was saying earlier, we're going to know exactly where every one of these is across the province, and if you were ever to walk into one and it wasn't registered—there should be a label there saying, "I'm a registered salon owner." It's only good for their industry, so they should be helping us weed those bad characters out. But if you ever did, as an individual, walk in, the first thing you should do is call your medical officer of health and report it so we can get that out of the system. We just can't afford to go down there.

As I mentioned earlier, this is the most deadly form of skin cancer, and it increases by 1.8% with each additional tanning session per year. So if you had 20 of those, then it's 20% more likely you're going to get cancer down the road. It's one of those things that you have to think—again, the novelty of a tan and looking great because of some magazine or some promotional activity isn't worth your health. It's just not worth putting you and/or your family—and our system, for that matter—through the cost to treat someone from a cancer that could have been prevented.

I harp on, and I'll continue to harp on, with my recreation background: Let's prevent the things that we have control over. Let's not try to fix them once we allow people to get cancer. Let's not allow a business to operate that knowingly puts at risk youth who are going to, at some point down the road in their life, get cancer and we're going to have to treat that and try to make them better.

Interjection: Be proactive.

Mr. Bill Walker: Be proactive; absolutely.

A study conducted on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society showed that between 2006 and 2012, the use of tanning beds more than doubled, from 7% to 16%, among Ontario students in grades 11 and 12. That's horrendous. It's going in the wrong direction, and it's exactly why we need this type of legislation to be able to help.

Interjection: Vanity.

Mr. Bill Walker: Vanity is very—I was almost going to say "important," and that's the wrong word. Vanity,

unfortunately, is a very powerful motivator for some people, and again, particularly at an age—and I'm not saying anything disrespectful to youth, because there are very bright, intelligent youth who do make very wise and good choices, but there is a percentage of the population who don't do that. This type of legislation is required to ensure that that won't happen, and at least, at the very end of the day, we're forcing those students of that age group to look and say, "Is this really worth it?" Do you really know what you're doing when you lie under that bed? Do you really know that there are proven clinical studies that this is going to increase your chance of cancer later in life? We have to ensure that we stand up for our youth. They are our future.

The research is clear that the main environmental risk factor for skin cancer is exposure to that ultraviolet radiation from the sun and through indoor tanning. It is important to clarify that exposure to UV rays is linked to skin cancer—I've said that earlier—and that UV rays from tanning beds can be even more harmful than those rays outside. I'd don't know why that is, I'm not really into the technology side of things, but just think of being encapsulated in a little bed and those rays are right there. You can't move. There's nothing between you and those rays getting at you. So we have to do the things that we can at this point.

I've got some petitions here—in fact, a whole raft of petitions—"Fight Cancer," and these are from many, many constituents across my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I know we're not supposed to use props, and I'm not using it for that, Speaker, but I wanted to make sure that you could see that these are people who have signed their names to them, saying, "I absolutely agree with this." It goes on, "I'm concerned about the health risks associated with indoor tanning." It causes melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. It's one of the most common types of cancer for youth between the ages of 15 and 29 and is one of the most preventable diseases. Cancer is a reality facing all communities across Canada. Based on current diagnosis rates, two in five Canadians will develop cancer during their lifetime—two in five. That's unbelievable. We need to be doing more to ensure that people don't have to go through and bear the pain, the agony, the emotional stress and duress that this horrible, horrible disease causes. An estimated one out of every four Canadians is expected to die from cancer.

There are all kinds of fundraisers; there are all kinds of research. I'm a big proponent of supporting those research efforts to ensure that at some point—and as I allude back to my hero, Terry Fox, we will, at some point, find a cure. I'm certain of that. We have to do it sooner than later because it is such a huge drain on the family structure, on the family unit.

The stress that I see families go through—in my own family, it was horrendous. To watch a sister—she died in three days. She went to the hospital on Wednesday, and she never came home Sunday. She didn't even know she had it. But, unfortunately, she was a 35-year smoker, and

that, at some point, I trust was the cause. She had lung cancer, and it spread through her whole body. She didn't even know she was ill. That was the most horrifying thing that I have ever gone through.

If we can do anything in this House, this is one of the things that—I think we should be standing up, and we should be expediting this bill to get it through. We don't need to be standing in this House, speaking about this for hours, let alone days upon weeks. We need to get this done. We need to ensure that none of those pages in front of you, or the great youth across our province, ever go through this on something that we can prevent today. We could have this done and through, and I would hope that the government of the day would take this bill, of all bills, and expedite it through. There's absolutely nothing that I think should stand in the way.

To me, when people take time to actually walk to my office, fax my office and hand-sign something—in any career I've had, if you're willing to put it in writing, I've got time to listen to you. This is something that people have taken the time and got them—and I trust, from the cancer society, that these are across the province. These are probably in every one of our offices, and I think you could probably fill the Clerks' table. I'm going to submit these to the Clerks' table today, if I could have a page come up, and I'll have them delivered to the Clerks' table.

The other thing, I think, that I want and I haven't—thank you very much, page Amina. Thank you so much. I hope you're enjoying your time here, you and your colleagues. The other thing I haven't talked about and alluded to is there are other ways. We can do other things. Some people will say that they go to the tanning salon because they want to get vitamin D. Well, there are lots of other ways of getting vitamin D without putting yourself in harm's way and accepting the risks that come with those tanning beds—for instance, through safe exposure to the sun and taking supplements.

I mean, again, the sun is actually good for us. We need that sun. If it goes away, despite what Warton Willie says—at times, he doesn't want the sun to come out. Some people do, some people don't, without a shadow of a doubt. He's a bit like a politician because 50% of the time he's right and 50% of the time he's wrong with the people out there. But he wants to see the sun. We all need to see the sun.

In those February blah days when we haven't seen it for a while, you can tell people's energy levels are going down. People are getting a bit grumpy, even in this House. Mr. Leal, sometimes, you would agree with me that maybe people in this House get grumpy around February at times because they haven't seen the sun enough. They haven't got that vitamin D quotient. Would you confer with that?

Hon. Jeff Leal: The odd time.

Interjection: Eat tomatoes.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Eat tomatoes.

Mr. Bill Walker: Eat tomatoes. There you go. Thank you so much. So, see, even across the floor, we're actual-

ly finally working together. We're able to work collaboratively to find some help and some cure for our vitamin D deficiencies. Maybe if we all took a bit more, this place would be a little bit more friendly. I think your colleague, Speaker, talks about the downward spiral, and I think we can all support that upward spiral.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Eat the tomatoes; don't throw them.

Mr. Bill Walker: Eat the tomatoes; don't throw them. That's right.

The main reasons students give for using tanning beds are feeling they look better with a tan, getting a tan before going on vacation or for special occasions and because of peer influence. We hear that with all kinds of things: alcohol, drugs. But this is really no different. This is one of those ones that, again, if all of your colleagues are saying, "I want to look tanned," and, "I want to look spiffy, like that article in the Glamour magazine," it's a very tough thing to overturn.

I say, again, to all the youth who may be out there: Please stand strong. Please show your will. Please show your conviction, and also step up for your other friends who may be doing it. Grab them by the hand and say, "Look, I just want to have a chat. Do you know?" Come and see one of us. Come and see someone in the cancer society who has the information to be able to show you.

To look out for our youth's best interests, we must appropriately address these products and services that put youth at considerable risk. As Progressive Conservatives, we don't believe in creating bans just for the sake of it. In fact, we continually, in this House, say we need to get rid of legislation and regulation that is not serving the people. There is an inordinate amount of regulation and legislation, and at times, I think there are organizations that say that that's their only job: to move paper around. That, absolutely, we don't want. But this is the type of legislation—this is the type of regulation—that we are proud to stand behind.

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There's a demonstrable need when we're talking about tanning bed use among minors. We need to ensure that at every step, at every opportunity—that's why I've talked for almost 30 minutes on this. It may be a bit redundant in places, but I feel compelled to repeat it and repeat it and repeat it, because at some point, that extra time you've said it may just actually resonate with someone. They may just actually stop in their tracks and say, "You know what? I'm going to spend some time. I'm going to think about what Mr. Walker just said"—or Ms. Elliott or whoever else may speak on this bill in this House.

We need to be doing the proactive things. We need to ensure we're going to have the ability to put regulation that's going to serve the people.

I'm just going to conclude, if I can. We're going to put Bill 30—I certainly hope we're going to put Bill 30 in again. I implore the Liberal government, who controls what comes to the House and how quickly it goes through the House in second reading and third reading, to make this a priority. Let's not spend hours and days in this House.

I think Christine did a marvellous job of putting out the thought process, being able to share information and educate and communicate to people the ills that are associated with tanning beds. I think she was very articulate in what she said and on how this bill can address some of those and it can be a preventative. It can be doing our due diligence on behalf of our youth to ensure that there are regulations in place, that there are consequences if people are rogues and want to continue to run tanning beds illegally and allow those people under 18 years of age in.

I think what we want to do is make sure that this legislation—An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments—is legislated, approved and, in fact, executed as soon as possible. It would be a great acknowledgement for all the work that our Canadian Cancer Society volunteers do in every single one of our communities. Again, I do a heartfelt shout-out for all of the work that you do. I know that sometimes it's trudging through the laneways in the middle of winter, door-knocking and doing those things. Raising funds and running fundraisers is a lot of work, a lot of time and a lot of volunteer energy and resources. My hat is off to you and every single person in your organization, because you are actually making a difference in people's lives.

We are only a small part here—that we can help enhance that effort on your behalf. It's my hope that today we can get this through, we can get all three parties' support, get it to the table, get it through, get it passed and make it legislation, so that tomorrow those labels will go out the door and we will actually help our youth down the road.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to speak to Bill 30, to ban these tanning beds to youth, and happy to hear the comments from the two members who spoke this morning, from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and from Whitby-Oshawa—very sensible comments we've heard this morning. It's the kind of good common sense that we should hear more of in these chambers.

Cancer touches all of us. As recently as two years ago, I lost a good friend and a co-worker—far too young. He was the age that I am right now. He died just down the street at the hospital, from melanoma. He was not a tanning bed user; he was just somebody who was unfortunate.

But I think that when we have the power to actually combat cancer, we need to do that. This is an obvious bill—this is an obvious step—to promote better health and to fight cancer in Ontario, and that's why I think it's clear and obvious that New Democrats will support this bill.

In fact, I think we should note that it was the member from Nickel Belt, our health critic, France Gélinas, who brought this forward for years. I look at the approach that Ms. Gélinas takes to health, and I think that this is what we should be talking about. This is the approach we should have in this House and in this province. We heard it echoed this morning from folks here.

This idea that we need to do the things upfront to promote health and to protect the health of people here—when you look at the provincial budget, there's obviously a problem with the budget right now and the growing costs of health care. All of these costs are about responding to sickness, and so few steps are taken to stop people from getting sick in the first place. I think we need an entirely different framework when it comes to health care in this province. When I talk to France Gélinas, these are the things that she tells me. There is so much that we can do as a society to make people healthier.

I'm happy to hear the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound talk about our duty to protect youth. I do think that we have a duty to protect youth, to protect all of us, to promote good health, and I'd like to see more of this approach from all members in this assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? Who's up? The Minister of Community and Social Services—we have a teeter-totter going here.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm just absolutely delighted to respond to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. As one who's experienced, both in my family and personally, the fear of cancer—and I know what it does to one. Thank goodness for the cancer society and the cancer support groups around the province who are there to assist families to cope with this.

This bill just makes sense. It made sense two years ago, it made sense five years ago and certainly it makes sense today. The sooner we can mobilize the often slow-to-be-mobilized resources of this place to get this bill discussed in all the readings where that's required and have it become law, the sooner we'll be able to look at ourselves in the mirror in the morning and say, "Hey, maybe we did something useful the other day when we passed the bill."

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Finally, after 10 years.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes. Well, there's never a wrong time to do the right thing, right? I stand with those who favour moving forward.

I was particularly impressed with the young man's—sorry—the honourable member's presentation.

Interjections.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Us young guys have to stick together, right?

He captured it well, as did his colleague from—Ajax?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Whitby-Oshawa.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Whitby-Oshawa, okay—and colleagues in the third party, and I know all my colleagues here. It's time to move forward. It's never a wrong time to do the right thing. Let's get at it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I want to applaud the efforts of my honourable colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and my honourable colleague from Whitby-Oshawa—is that correct? As I listen to other members

within our esteemed Legislature, I'm thrilled to see that this bill will pass; this bill will get through.

As a father of three and an occasional user, in the past, of tanning beds—but even my children—I would watch them and caution them, “Don’t go in those tanning beds.” But now, through the efforts of our cancer society and bringing forward the carcinogenic aspects of tanning beds on young people and on people in general, and the fact that it does cause cancer—at least as a parent I want to ensure that my children are safe and not able to go in those tanning beds. Unfortunately, they’re beyond that 18 years of age or 19 years of age, but again I look at it and I say, “You know what? We can still protect today’s youth.”

We look at health care costs throughout this entire province, and health care is the number one expense of this government. Let’s be proactive. Let’s use preventive approaches to protect today’s youth because today’s youth will be tomorrow’s aging population, and with an aging population, all of a sudden you get the melanoma; you get the other effects of cancer. That’s not a good thing, and that just escalates costs as well.

Let’s protect our loved ones. Let’s warn them in advance that tanning beds, especially at young ages and with tender young skin, are not a healthy thing. They need to be protected; as adults, let’s protect our youth for tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It needs to be stated quite categorically, I think: There is absolutely nothing healthy-looking about a tan. We know that most of the users of tanning beds are young women, so this is a women’s issue. As women’s critic, I wanted to focus on that.

The member spoke about the role that the beauty industry and the fashion industry play in this. I have to tell you, my daughter works for a dermatologist, and he and she will tell you that there’s nothing pretty about the effects of sun damage over time. Women need to get the message that tanning doesn’t make you prettier; it makes you uglier over time. We know—we’re women; come on, let’s be real—we like to look good. So do men, of course. But the message has to get out. We need the beauty industry outside; we need the fashion industry outside. We need to get the message to our daughters, to our granddaughters, very, very clearly and succinctly.

Of course we support this bill. It’s again the member from Nickel Belt’s bill, brought in via the government. We want to see it passed as quickly as possible. But I think, once it’s passed, there’s still a great deal of work to do, and the work to do is this: to get the message out that there’s nothing healthy-looking about a tan and there’s nothing beautiful or cute about a tan either, and to show the effects—as we’ve shown the effects of cigarette smoking—of tanning and the sun on skin over time.

I can tell you, we in Canada are prettier. I’ve talked to Australians and those people who are out in the sun in Australia a lot of the time. We look younger up here. Why? One simple difference: We’re not as exposed to

the sun as often. Any dermatologist will tell you this. Anybody who works in a clinic and sees the effects will tell you this.

We need to get that message out to our daughters and our granddaughters. We ask the beauty industry and the fashion industry to help us do that. There’s nothing healthy-looking about a tan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Whitby–Oshawa has two minutes.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I really think we’ve had a very productive discussion today on an issue that we can all agree on: that Bill 30 is a bill that should be passed without any further delay. The time has come, though it has been presented before. I do really thank the member for Nickel Belt for her efforts in this respect. I think the time has come now for us all to move forward with it.

I would like to thank, first of all, my colleague the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his very thoughtful remarks, as well as the remarks by the member for Davenport, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex and the member from Parkdale–High Park.

I think everybody has added a lot of their own experience to this, and I think it’s fair to say that no family is immune to the ravages of cancer. In my own situation, both of my parents passed away at a very young age due to cancer. It’s something that we need to be vigilant against and to do anything that we can to make sure we can protect our young people from developing cancer down the road.

I would agree entirely with the member from Parkdale–High Park, who said that this is very much a young women’s issue, although young men are also involved in it. I have three sons. I can’t say that tanning beds were ever an issue with them. We’ve had other issues, but not tanning beds. But I think, certainly, with a lot of young women, having a tanned appearance, primarily to go to prom and to other special occasions, is really an important thing. We really need to get the message out there that it is not healthy over the long term and you don’t want to have that leathery appearance as you get older and to expose yourself to cancer when you don’t need to.

I’m really happy this has come forward. I’m really pleased that the representatives from the Canadian Cancer Society were here today. I would also like to sincerely thank all of the volunteers in all of our communities who do so much work in promoting the efforts of the cancer society, the work that they’re trying to do, and in raising money for the cause. Many volunteers are out this month, so if they come to your door, please give generously. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 3 o’clock this afternoon.

Mr. Mike Colle: No question period today?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry; 10:30. *The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.*

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, I'm not introducing anybody, but I grew up in a little place called New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and I just wanted to acknowledge today the passing of Canadian musical icon Rita MacNeil, who I got to meet when I was 11 years old, who brought an enormous amount of joy to the people of Nova Scotia and Canada. I wanted to express condolences to her family. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I won't steal one of her statements on that, but I appreciate it very much. I had a chance to meet her as well.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce my dear wife, Carole Paikin-Miller, in the west gallery.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to introduce two friends of mine in the Legislature today: one is Robin Singh—Robin is from Brampton—and the other is Randhir Rai; he's from Orangeville. I really want to extend them a very, very warm welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to, first of all, say that people will be joining us in the gallery very shortly from the Ontario Association of Career Colleges, led by their director, Paul Kitchin. I want everybody to give them a warm welcome.

Mr. Jonah Schein: For the first time ever, I'd like to welcome students from City View Alternative: Myles Wyton-Fraser, Katie Newhouse, Dune Brule and Murley Herrle-Fanning. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to introduce the parents of page Stacey Fernandes, page captain today, from my riding of Pickering-Scarborough East. Her father, Alex Fernandes, and mother, Susan Fernandes, are here joining us today. Thanks for being here. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce to the House today the 2013 Ontario Queen of the Furrow, Sara Little, and her friend Chris Wood.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last week I had the opportunity to introduce a page from my riding, Kamryn Hartley. It's a big day for Kamryn. Kamryn is the page captain today, and she's joined in the members' east gallery by her mother—who has not left her side for two weeks, I think—Christie Hartley; and also by her grandfather from Pass Lake, Ontario, James Isaksen. We're thrilled to have them here with us today.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome from my riding Beth Dodwell and Emerson Warggle. They won a Lunch With Your MPP certificate from the Taste of the Town fundraising event held by the Gibson Centre in Alliston. God bless them, and welcome.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's my pleasure to rise and acknowledge—I believe in one of the galleries today the legislative intern who is working in my office currently, Andrea Ernesaks, is here with us, from Ottawa originally. She's doing a really fantastic job, and I'm happy to have her in my office.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a large contingent from Prince Edward county, making the bus trip

here this morning. They're from POOCH, which stands for Patrons of Our County Hospital. They'll be rallying outside later to protect services and beds at Picton memorial hospital.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome Zoe Letwin. She's the outreach coordinator at Partners in Research in London, a wonderful organization. Welcome, Zoe.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. Good morning, Premier. My question is for you. We have long said that someone has purposely removed documents. After weeks of testimony, we learned yesterday just how this charade actually worked. Your government, Premier, told the OPA to remove pages that said words like "TransCanada," "southwest GTA" and other words like that because they didn't precisely fit the scope. After removing thousands of pages, you turned over 36,000 documents. Then, Speaker, someone wised up and realized that this charade may actually be breaking the law, and 20,000 pages, including the ones originally removed, were turned over.

With pages still missing, Premier, is this your idea of transparency? Premier, just what is it you don't want Ontarians to find out?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to start right off the bat. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I think all of us recognize that there is important work that's going on in the committee, and that work should continue. But if the honourable member wants to hold hearings on the floor of the Legislature, I'm quite happy to talk about some of the things that have gone on in the committee.

His reference, I believe, is to an individual by the name of Jesse Kulendran, who is an official in the Ministry of Energy—from what I understand, a mid-level official. There was a story that came out which she has denied in front of the committee.

I'd also like to quote from the Deputy Minister of Energy, who was asked this very question. He's someone whom the member who asked the question has called a credible and very solid witness. He testified the following—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. John Milloy: Okay; I'll wait for the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You certainly will. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: With all that tap dancing, Mr. Speaker, I actually thought he would end with jazz hands with that one.

The auditor told us that there were 10 side deals negotiated before you gave the company a sole-sourced deal to build a plant right next door to the one you're closing. Speaker, let me give you an example of Liberal negotiating. The company sought \$7 million in damages on an unrelated issue from years gone by. As a pre-condition to even start negotiating, the company demanded that the government pay them \$15.4 million to satisfy that \$7-million court case.

Premier, in your zeal to get this done, you went ahead and paid them that money and then forgave \$700,000 in court fees that they were ordered to pay. And to make sure no one ever heard of it, you buried this in a side deal. What other side deals did you do for Oakville?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member can't get away with dropping the drive-by smear that he had in the first question.

I'd like to quote the Deputy Minister of Energy, whom the honourable member himself called a credible and very solid witness. Here's what the deputy had to say: "I never directed Jesse to go to the OPA and ask them to exclude documents. I never myself directed the OPA to exclude ... documents. When I talked to Jesse about the allegations, she told me ... that she did not direct the OPA. I have no reason to not believe what Jesse has" said.

Furthermore, Peter Wallace, the secretary of cabinet, launched an investigation into these allegations and confirmed that there was absolutely no evidence that Ms. Kulendran acted inappropriately.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable member owes an apology to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

For the second time, the member from Leeds—Greenville will come to order, and I think he knows why I'm asking him to refrain.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, let me tell you how the taxpayers and the ratepayers are paying for this \$15.4-million gift, seeing as you don't want to talk about it. Ten million dollars came through Dwight Duncan when he announced that the cancellation rose from \$180 million to \$190 million. The extra \$5.4 million was paid to the company—this is all from the AG's report—for a new power agreement, but allowed them to simply keep the money if the site wasn't deemed viable. But the auditor told us on page 15 that you knew the site wasn't viable even before you made the deal, so the company simply got to keep the \$5.4-million gift. Now that these facts have come out, maybe it's something the Attorney General will be looking into.

Premier, I ask you again: Tell us now about all of the other side deals made for Oakville.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, the honourable member forgets the obvious, which is that his party,

in the 2011 election campaign, stated that if they were elected they would shut down the Mississauga plant.

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We've seen the YouTube video. We've seen the Leader of the Opposition as he stands there, surrounded by adoring PC candidates, promising to the community that if he is elected—on a question from Mr. Brennan of the *Toronto Star*—it was going to be done—"done, done, done." His candidates went out and said that the only way to stop this plant was to elect a Tim Hudak government. The fact of the matter is that their party was equally intent. It was a promise they made and a promise we kept.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakubuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, unless you've abdicated, I hope you'll actually answer the questions. This is getting tiresome. You say you want to be open and transparent, but all of your actions show exactly the opposite. In his press conference on Monday, the auditor said that you deliberately changed the language you were using to confuse the public about the total cost of the Mississauga gas plant cancellation. We've asked your energy minister to do the right thing and correct his record for repeatedly misinforming the House, but he's refused to do that. A pattern is emerging and your claims of transparency are being revealed as not standing up to the smell test. Will you now admit that you've been deliberately lowballing the cost of these cancellations to give the public a false impression of how much of their money you've wasted?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I want to thank the auditor for his work. I want to thank him for what he has done. We are accepting his findings, and he's provided a longer-term assessment by estimating cost and savings over 20 years; I said that yesterday. What the auditor does is provide an objective and independent report. I just want to remind the House and remind the member opposite that I asked the auditor to look at the Oakville situation. I asked the auditor in the name of openness and transparency. I have said from the beginning that I want all the information and all the questions that are being asked to be answered. That's why I asked the auditor to look at the Oakville situation. I'm not going to pre-empt his report—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew asked the question. I know he wants to hear the answer.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, the auditor is appearing in committee today, I understand, so the member opposite would have an opportunity to ask the auditor questions today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakubuski: Back to the Premier: We've been languishing in the muck and the mire in committee for months now, looking into your political decision to

cancel those gas plants. Witness after witness has provided sworn testimony that disputes your story and the stories of other Liberal loyalists. When you took over from Dalton McGuinty, you promised the public transparency, but just last week the former chief of staff to the Minister of Energy admitted to breaking the law by destroying his email records related to the gas plant cancellation. What was the reaction of your new government to this revelation? The trademark old McGuinty shrug.

Premier, you can end this. After all, isn't that what you and your new government have promised? It's time to come clean with the people of Ontario. Release all of the details relating to all the costs on Oakville.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm glad that they're speaking about the Oakville relocation now because the auditor has reported on Mississauga. But I'm very pleased to speak to the Oakville situation. I have in my hand a notice that was on the website of the OPA on September 24, 2012. I also have a memorandum of understanding that was on the website, and it's been there since September 2012. It's a legal agreement between TransCanada Energy Ltd., the Ontario Power Authority and Her Majesty the Queen. I want to refer to schedule B, the reimbursement agreement. All the details of the reimbursement agreement are on schedule B.

There is also schedule A, what the OPA agreement is all about. This has been translated into a 500-page document, which is also on the site. I'd like to have one of the pages come over here, please, and I'd like—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. Stop the clock—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. That's my job.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wish some people would take that advice.

Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier. Premier, you sound just like your predecessor when you defend the indefensible. After serving your entire career as a McGuinty Liberal, you just don't seem to know any other way. Why do you keep insisting on playing this game when no one believes you anymore? Your energy minister still contends that the cost of cancelling the Oakville plant will be \$40 million, but JoAnne Butler, a highly respected OPA vice-president, testified under oath that the cost at Oakville will be between \$769 million and \$926 million, and that your government has been aware of this for months.

Premier, here's what the people deserve: the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. You have fallen far

from the lofty principles you claim to hold dear when you took this office. Did you ever really believe in those principles, or have the trappings of power destroyed every ounce of integrity that you ever had?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the volume and the emotion is not reflected by the facts. That's the reality.

I sent over a copy of a memorandum of understanding of the Oakville agreement with TransCanada Energy. It sets out all of the costs, the parameters of the agreement, and that has been public and on the website since September 12, 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's time the committee turned its attention to the issue of how we site these energy facilities moving forward. The Premier has been very open in expanding the mandate of the committee so that we can correct the mistake that was made. The mistake was in how we were siting. We have admitted that that needs to be rectified, and the committee has the mandate to deal with that issue.

I would like the member from Renfrew to respond to the document I sent over, which is a legal agreement with respect to Oakville.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians want to trust that their government will put them first, but instead they see a government paying \$150 million to a hedge fund in the US when it could have put 25,000 young people to work. They see a government that's creating a new tax loophole to help wealthy corporations pay to wine and dine their customers, their clients, while at the same time they're asking Ontarians to pay more. They see a government that has told them it would cost \$190 million to cancel a gas plant and now it turns out it cost \$275 million. It's the same old status quo, the same old politics as usual here in Ontario. Does the Premier understand why this is a problem for people?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to be clear, and this is in response to the leader of the third party's question but it's in response to this situation. That is that as soon as I was appointed Premier we said that we were going to put in place a process that would allow every piece of information that was being asked for, that we would work to expand the mandate of committees so that all of the information could be made available.

The reality is that a political decision was made to cancel the gas plant. There was a cost associated with that. I regret that those decisions weren't made earlier. I wish that we had had a better process in place so that we weren't standing here in this situation today, that all of us wouldn't be in a situation where these costs had to be paid. The reality is, there was a cost to implementing the

decision that all the parties agreed with, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the questions are being answered.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier has asked the civil service to use the term "new government," but I don't see much new: A government that still gives well-connected insiders billion-dollar tax breaks at the same time that families get asked to pay more; a Premier who has had months and months to set the record straight about the cost of the gas plants, but won't come clean.

People want to see the government put them first instead of putting insiders first. Does the Premier understand that people are frustrated with a government that says it's new but instead it's the same old status quo?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, I'm not going to attempt to speak for every person in Ontario, but I really believe that what the people of Ontario want is, they want the answers—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew is now going to be told that this is it.

Now, I want to refresh everyone's memory—stop the clock, please—and that is, when I say you are warned, you don't have any chances after that, just to be clear.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Am I warned?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Did I say it? Would you like me to? Fine. I'm just—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We could go back and forth, but the point is very clear here. I have said this before and I'll say it again: This is a very difficult situation that we're trying to deal with. It deserves our attention, but it's not going to be at the sake of decorum, so let's keep it down.

Please finish, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much. The auditor has provided the Legislature with objective and independent information, an independent report, and that's as it should be. I believe that's what the people of Ontario deserve: to have an independent review of what was a political decision that had a cost associated with it. That's the reality.

I wish that we had made the decision earlier. We didn't, and we implemented a political decision that everyone—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What they don't deserve is a Liberal government that pays off US hedge funds instead of investing in jobs or strengthening health care in this province. They also don't deserve a government that's making life more affordable for the wealthiest corporations instead of making life more affordable for hard-working families. In fact, they're trying to figure out why the public—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. It's very unfair to the leader of the third party when I can't hear the question and the heckling is with the other party. Let's give them an opportunity to ask that question in a fair way.

Leader, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In fact, what they're trying to figure out is why the public should be on the hook to pay for decisions made by the Liberal Party for the benefit of the Liberal Party. They're tired of the denials. They're tired of the hidden information. They want the Premier to admit—that's all they want—that this was wrong, and to apologize. Will she do that, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been very clear that I regret that the decision wasn't made earlier, but I think it underestimates the people of Ontario to suggest that somehow we can say to them, or the leader of the third party can say, "We would have cancelled the gas plant and it wouldn't have cost a thing." That is a fantasy, and it's not fair to the people of Ontario to say that we can start an infrastructure project and we can cancel it and there will not be a cost associated with that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Kawartha Lakes—come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Halton is inches away from something he doesn't want to be.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm the Premier who asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville situation, Mr. Speaker. I said, "Let's open up the mandate of the committees." Let's make sure that they can ask all the questions that need to be asked. Let's make sure that all the information is available.

I regret that the decision wasn't made earlier, but the reality is that we all agreed that that decision should be made. We made it, we implemented it, and there was a cost associated with it.

DRUG FORMULATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. People across the province were shocked by news that over 1,000 patients fighting cancer received diluted chemotherapy treatment over the last year, and they were shocked when they learned that the government hadn't provided any oversight while they let hospitals outsource that service.

Can the Premier tell us how many other companies are currently doing this mixing of drugs work and what oversight they're receiving right now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health will speak to the specifics of this, but I just want to say that we have acted as quickly as possible to address this issue. It is absolutely unacceptable that it happened, and that's why we've got an expert panel that is reviewing the situation. That's why Dr. Jake Thiessen

is in place to give us advice, to make sure that this never happens again.

It should not have happened. There needed to be more oversight. We need to determine where in the system, if there is a systemic issue, there needs to be a change, and that's exactly what Dr. Thiessen will be talking to us about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, yesterday in committee officials from this government admitted that they still can't say how many companies are doing this kind of work and how many patients are potentially affected. People expect the health care system to provide them with reliable care when they need it. What does the Premier have to say to patients who want to know the drugs they are taking are safe and reliable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member opposite knows, this is an issue we are taking very, very seriously. We have brought all the partners together, including Health Canada, to ensure that we can say with complete confidence that patients are getting the highest-quality drugs. The member also, I think, knows that Cancer Care Ontario went out to all of the hospitals, the 77 hospitals, in the province that deliver chemotherapy and made sure they did an audit of their drug supply to ensure that this was an issue that was not happening anywhere else, that this problem was confined to the four identified hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I was speaking not just specifically of chemotherapy, but drugs overall. I think the minister missed that point. In fact, her staff or the staff at the ministry could not answer that question in committee yesterday, and that's why I'm putting it to the Premier today, and to the minister.

It's a pretty basic issue. People facing some of the most frightening diseases that we can even imagine went to hospital for treatment. Hospitals assume that someone is providing oversight for the drugs that they're providing to those patients, and yet the government not only was not providing the oversight but still, weeks later, can't identify what they are supposed to be overseeing and whether there are other companies doing similar work in Ontario that they're supposed to be overseeing today, weeks after this incident occurred.

When is the Premier going to be able to provide us and the people of this province with some basic answers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Premier has made the commitment that we will give the College of Pharmacists the tools it needs to ensure the safety of the supply. That work is well under way.

I think it's important to acknowledge that this is not just an Ontario problem. In fact, we have a representative from New Brunswick sitting on our working group. I'm very pleased that the federal health minister yesterday did commit that, if the review determines that there is a

federal role, she will seriously consider any changes that are recommended to prevent this from happening again.

All of our health care providers and professions are focused on ensuring that we understand what happened here and that we can ensure that it does not happen again.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. On Monday, the Auditor General found that the cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant cost \$275 million. Minister, that's \$85 million more than the government claimed for months. Yesterday, when speaking to the media after question period, you said that this amount was already accounted for in the upcoming budget. If the government actually believed their own words that the cost of this self-serving decision was only 190 million taxpayer dollars, then how did you as finance minister budget for \$275 million in the upcoming budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows all too well, we accommodated \$190 million in our reports last year. The amounts going forward will be accommodated through the ratepayers, and we recognize that. More importantly, we are going, over a 20-year period—we make certain that the deficit is reduced by 2017-18, and we're on plan to do just that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The auditor has yet to release his report on the cancellation and relocation of the Oakville plant. Independent energy experts, including Bruce Sharp and Tom Adams, have testified that the costs associated with this politically motivated waste of taxpayer dollars could reach almost a billion dollars. Yesterday, outside this House, you told media that this sprawling mismanagement of funds was accounted for in your upcoming budget. This means that you know what cancelling the Oakville gas plant will cost and you need not wait for the Auditor General to uphold transparency in government.

Minister, will you be honest with the hard-working people of Ontario, restore some integrity to your Liberal government and release the true cost of saving Kevin Flynn's seat?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we'll await the Auditor General's report and we'll determine exactly what's there to be dealt with.

But this is what we are dealing with: We're dealing with a budget that's going to enable us to ensure that we grow our economy and balance our books. We have a plan to balance our books by 2017-18, and it's working. We've exceeded our targets four years in a row. We're three point some-odd billion dollars less than we anticipated.

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More importantly, jobs are being created and Ontario's fundamentals are strong. That's why more people are investing in Ontario than ever before, and that's why we're poised to do so much better.

What we require is collaboration and co-operation. All Ontarians expect that to be so. I would hope that you'll read the budget before you make your decision. Take a look at what we're doing; take a look at our path to balance. It's working, and you should be part of that as well.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Premier, over and over, your government has insisted that Ontarians were only going to spend \$190 million to cancel the Mississauga plant. As we know, it's \$275 million.

Yesterday when I asked Shelly Jamieson, former secretary of cabinet, if the Ontario Power Authority would have kept ministers and the government informed of the costs and risks that they were encountering, she answered very simply: "Yes."

Will the Premier admit that she and her ministers have known for a long time that the cost of the Mississauga cancellation was a lot more than 190 million bucks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: We have a report from the Auditor General on Mississauga, and I understand the auditor in fact will be appearing in front of the committee today. The Premier has taken the step of asking the auditor to look into the Oakville situation and come forward with a costing there.

The interesting thing, though, is that both the Conservatives and the New Democrats promised to cancel both those plants, and we are very anxious to learn about their costing going into it. In fact, the Liberal members invited the NDP candidates to appear in front of the committee, as well as the Progressive Conservative candidates. Surprisingly, not a single one of them was available. So I hope that the honourable member will be encouraging his fellow NDP members who vehemently opposed both the Oakville and the Mississauga plants to come forward and talk about the type of costing that they undertook.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I take that deflection as a yes.

It's clear from testimony by senior civil servants and senior Ontario Power Authority staff that the ministry should know what it cost to cancel both Oakville and Mississauga.

In fact, Kristin Jenkins, a vice-president of the OPA, testified yesterday that there were ongoing communications between the OPA and the Ministry of Energy about the cost of cancellations.

This fall, a new Auditor General will give her or his assessment of the cost of the Oakville cancellation. How much does the Premier think it cost to cancel that Oakville plant?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the honourable member wants to hold committee hearings during question period. That's fine. But I think the honourable member is being a little bit mischievous in talking about these costs, that they are easily calculated.

He's interested in quoting Kristin Jenkins. Let me quote Kristin Jenkins and what she had to say about

costs: "There is savings associated with the location of these plants. I think it is important to take into account that there will be some savings that also need to be factored in when looking at the total cost."

The fact of the matter is, this is a complex issue. We have asked the Auditor General to look into it.

But again, the honourable member has ignored my question. Where were the NDP candidates? What costing were they looking at? What costing was the central party looking at? Will he encourage his NDP colleagues to come before the committee?

POWER PLANTS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Premier. On Monday, the Auditor General reported that although the OPA reimbursed Greenfield \$4.2 million for the Mississauga plant site, it still allowed Greenfield to retain the title of the property.

I ask the Premier: If you purchased a new house, would you allow the previous owner to retain ownership of it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It is my understanding, and I believe it was also referred to in the Auditor General's report, that the actual site probably had a liability attached to it, rather than being an asset, in the sense that there was a lot of infrastructure on that site that would be very, very expensive to remove and it probably would be more expensive to retain it. Therefore, we let them keep it.

But the important issue is that the Auditor General has done his report. We have accepted the results of the Auditor General. The people of Ontario want to see some unity of purpose on the part of the three parties to move forward and determine how we can better site these projects.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that there's always a smile from the member from Sarnia. He was smiling when it went to Sarnia-Lambton, and he was taking credit for moving that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I want to remind members that while I'm speaking they're not supposed to be, and I also would like to remind members that the reason I ask you not to name persons' individual names is because it's a race to the bottom and not to the top. So let's start using their ridings. And for those members who are not in their seats, they're supposed to be really quiet.

Supplementary, please.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Back to the Premier, and I would just now comment about the minister speaking—the "would" and "should." It's past that time. This is a report that we're looking at, and it's not supposed to be based on "woulds" and "shoulds."

But I want to go back to the Premier in my supplementary. It was her government, not the OPA, who controlled this process and the negotiations with Greenfield.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Your government did not have to allow Greenfield to retain the title. You are accountable for this mess. You were in power overseeing the fiasco as it happened. Will you take responsibility for this fiasco, as well as eHealth and Ornge?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I was saying towards the end of my first response to the question, the member for Sarnia has been extremely pleased and has taken credit for the relocation to go into his community. He has accepted the credit for creating jobs in his community. The reality is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

First, the member will withdraw. And if I hear that again from anybody, I'm going to throw you out.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I will withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When the three parties made election promises to relocate the facilities—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew knows better. The member from Renfrew knows that those kinds of props are not appreciated by any of us, and if he does it again, I'll throw him out. These kinds of challenges are definitely unfair to anybody.

Finish, please, Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I think most people have forgotten the question by now, so I'll just sit down.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Nickel Belt.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right, you want to challenge me. The member from Huron-Bruce is warned.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yesterday, the committee looking at the diluted chemo drugs heard from their first witness. The deputy minister confirmed that the Ministry of Health doesn't know how widespread the outsourcing of cancer drugs is. The Ministry of Health doesn't know what companies are providing the drugs, and they can't comment whether the grey area of oversight is common within our health care system. This is disturbing to me and to a lot of Ontarians. Is the minister ready to admit the extent to which things have gone wrong under her leadership?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think everyone in this Legislature has the very same goal, and that goal is to get answers for patients, to understand what went wrong here, to make sure that this never happens again. That work is well under way.

I am very pleased that Health Canada has confirmed that it will exercise all of its existing legal authority to investigate Marchese Hospital Solutions, and I am hopeful that with Health Canada's co-operation, the College of Pharmacists will be able to obtain more information to inform its own decision.

Speaker, we have a strong commitment to understand what happened here, to learn any lessons that are to be learned from this experience and to ensure that it does not happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

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M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, to make matters even worse, it seems that it never occurred to the Ministry of Health—the body ultimately responsible for oversight of our health care system—that all of these unknowns could lead to problems. The minister likes to say that she doesn't want to point fingers, but that's exactly what she's doing. Ontarians are sick and tired that health care keeps failing us and that the Ministry of Health keeps failing in its basic role of oversight—in its basic, primary responsibility of oversight.

Will the Minister of Health admit that she failed to do her job?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's very important that we not politicize this issue, and I think it's very important to acknowledge that we in Ontario have an excellent health care system. There is nowhere else in the world that has a stronger cancer care system. It is an excellent system; it is not a perfect system, but we strive to continually improve the care. When an issue comes before us, we move quickly. We are moving quickly on this issue. Many will argue that this is an issue that should be led by Health Canada. What I am saying is, I have a responsibility to Ontario patients; it's a responsibility I take very seriously. As Health Canada gets more engaged, I will be very pleased for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the minister of economic development and employment.

Youth employment has been consistently lower than the general population, and our government identified this as a priority in the recent throne speech. With summer just around the corner, we know young people will be searching for meaningful employment that will help them develop the skills they will need to succeed in the future. Many young people in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt are looking for their first job to teach them

new responsibilities, time management and workplace practices. It also helps them to learn what to expect when entering the workplace full-time.

With just a few weeks from the summer—returning back home from post-secondary studies for the summer—can the minister please outline some of the great things our government is doing to help young people find meaningful summer employment?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly appreciate the opportunity to address this important issue. Of course, we identified youth employment in our throne speech as a priority for this government, and I believe that this is an important issue that all parties agree with us needs to be addressed. Every year, approximately 100,000 students here in Ontario find meaningful employment during the summer through our summer job strategy.

In my Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, our flagship summer employment opportunity for young people is called Summer Company. Youth involved in this program have over the years launched a tremendous array of businesses, including web development, lifeguarding, product sales, home renovation and environmental services—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —program is in its 13th year. Summer Company, last year alone, helped to launch 483 businesses with our young people.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the update to the House on what the government is doing to create summer jobs for young people. The Summer Company program sounds like a great opportunity for young people to become young business entrepreneurs and business leaders.

At the recent hearings of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, I heard about the needs of young people in northern and rural Ontario. I believe the youth in rural and northern Ontario wish to work outside, whether it is in a park or doing conservation work, or to gain experience in wildlife habitat.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he share with us examples of what employment opportunities this government has created for youth in northern and rural communities?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for asking about this very important issue. The member will be pleased to hear that our government is continuing to provide great summer employment opportunities throughout the province, and that the ministry is the leading provider of youth employment in the Ontario public service, with over 1,900 summer jobs available. The positions range from field work, collecting data and wildlife rehabilitation to education initiatives or working in 100 provincial parks.

One of our most important programs is the Stewardship Youth Ranger Program, which provides 225 opportunities in 30 communities across Ontario. The rangers will be able to work in five-person teams in their local

communities on a wide range of varying environmental initiatives. Recent changes have been made to expand the eight-week program to allow a broader range of Ontarians to participate, with locations ranging from Guelph and Peterborough to Dryden and Moosonee.

We've also worked with school boards to help ensure that the knowledge gained through this program will allow students to earn secondary school co-op credits.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Premier. Speaker, the Premier and the Minister of Energy have stood in this House and knowingly repeated erroneous figures in a campaign of confusion.

Yesterday, the Minister of Energy brought this government to a new low by having the gall to insist that Ontarians wait for—get this—yet another Auditor General's report, this time on the cancelled power plant in Oakville. This morning, the finance minister did the same thing. But Speaker, witness after witness, including the former secretary of cabinet, have testified under oath that the Premier and her cabinet know the full cost of cancelling the power plant in Oakville.

Meet the current Premier: same as the old one; same selfish Liberal agenda; same Liberal yes-men in cabinet; same tired old Liberal excuses.

Premier, enough of this shell game. Would you for once stand up for the taxpayers of Ontario, come clean, show some character and tell us the real cost of Oakville?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to remind the member opposite that I am the Premier who asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville situation. I am not going to pre-empt that process; I am going to wait for that process because we need that independent review of the situation.

Since we're in this general area, I just want to make it clear to the members opposite, but I want to make it clear to the people sitting in the galleries, I want to make it clear to the people of Ontario that I take responsibility for getting the information out; I take responsibility for a transparent process; and I take responsibility for learning from this process and making sure that, going forward, we have a much better process in place so that this does not happen again.

I really need people to be clear that I am not trying to abdicate responsibility. In fact, I said from the beginning: I understand it's our responsibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, if this is transparency, I have a very different—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. Carry on.

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, if this is transparency, I have a very different definition of what transparency is than this old Premier has.

Shelly Jamieson confirmed that cabinet was briefed on the “buckets of costs” related to cancelling both of these power plants.

If the Minister of Energy can't tell us what Oakville costs, there are three possible explanations for that. He either missed the briefing or wasn't paying attention; he told his staff not to brief him so he wouldn't have to tell this House; or he knows and refuses to be accountable on the floor of this Legislature. That means the minister is either incompetent, negligent or untrustworthy.

My question to the Premier is this: Why are any of those qualities good qualities for members of your cabinet?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Premier was right in asking the Auditor General to look into the Oakville relocation.

As I mentioned before, there is a memorandum of understanding on the website, but most importantly, there's a 500-page contract dealing with very technical issues, and the public is entitled to have an independent—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's about it. Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The public is entitled to have an independent interpretation of that 500-page technical document. It was the right thing for the Premier to ask for an independent opinion, and we will await it.

Mr. Speaker, are they suggesting that we pre-empt the Auditor General's work by coming out with numbers now which they will then attack? To have a credible process in this Legislature, we need to wait for the Auditor General's report.

DISASTER RELIEF

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last May, the people of Thunder Bay saw the worst of nature and the best of their neighbours when massive flooding tore through their community. When the waters finally receded, people were left with wrecked basements and ruined possessions.

1120

I saw the devastation with my own eyes, and the Premier did too. She looked flood victims in the eye and promised them disaster relief assistance funding of up to \$3.2 million for private losses, saying, “This is the number that we think was necessary, but it may very well be that it has to be adjusted.”

Yesterday, the people of Thunder Bay found out that they're only going to be getting \$300,000. Does the Premier think it's a fair adjustment for people who have already lost so much?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of the Environment is going to want to comment on the details, but I will just say that at the time I was the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I went to

Thunder Bay. We announced the disaster relief funding. If I recall correctly, it was up to \$17 million. I met with some of the communities surrounding Thunder Bay that also were going to get relief. My understanding is that that process is under way, that there are ongoing claims that are being filed, and that there's a discussion with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

I will let the Minister of the Environment deal with the supplementary, but we were very clear that we were there with the people of the communities around Thunder Bay and in Thunder Bay to provide that disaster relief.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Thunder Bay are proud and they're tough. They don't back down from hardship and they don't ask for help until they've really tried to help each other out first. That's what they did.

After the floods, volunteers with the Thunder Bay Disaster Relief Committee raised \$1.5 million at fundraisers like dinner-dances and things like that—

Applause.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —absolutely, they deserve an applause for that—in order to help their neighbours.

In the past, the Ontario disaster relief program has given \$2 for every \$1 raised locally. Private damages from the flooding are pushing up to the \$4.2-million mark. The Premier had no qualms about spending \$275 million to save Liberal seats in the last election, so why is the government, in this situation in Thunder Bay, only offering 20 cents on the dollar to the people of that community?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I just want to say that the two members from Thunder Bay, from Thunder Bay—Superior North and Thunder Bay—Atikokan, have worked diligently with the municipality and with our government to make sure that the money flowed to people in the community. I am so clear that the disaster relief fund that is in place is available to the people in the community. If there are anomalies, if there are situations where the applications haven't been followed up on or if there is more work that needs to be done, I know that the members will work with the minister to make sure that happens. We were crystal clear, when I was the minister and I was there, that there were many, many people who would qualify for relief and that the municipality would qualify for relief. So I'll certainly be talking to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to make sure that all of that is in place, but our commitment to the people who are affected by the flooding—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. This government's dedication and commitment to transit is unprecedented. I see signs of this every day in my riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville. For instance, when I'm driving from my constituency office to my home, I always see the new

BRT station that's opening up along Central Parkway and the 403; more evidence of the good work and the great public transit system that we are building in Mississauga thanks to this Liberal government.

Minister, could you speak to the BRT and tell us a little bit about how this is going to help the residents of Mississauga?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member. I can again tell this is a question on transit because it's coming from behind me. One day there will be one from across the way. I know it. I go to bed every night and pray that someone will ask me a question.

I'm going to guess that the member also knows that we have some amazing BRT programs because, unlike the members opposite, she knows how to use a clicker. She goes to websites. She reads energy MOUs. She reads the budget. She can do all kinds of things Tories can't do. It's truly amazing.

We're getting, in fact, 18 kilometres of two-lane grade-separated road from Winston Churchill Boulevard to Renforth, and that is 12 dedicated stops in the great city of Mississauga. Mayor McCallion is working with us. She's taking on zoning initiatives to make it a walkable, friendly community. We're very proud of our relationship with Mississauga.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that update. Now, the bus rapid transit isn't the only thing that's going on in Mississauga; there's a lot more. There's one initiative that I am particularly interested in for my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville, and that is about the light rail transit that's going to go across Hurontario, which is smack in the middle of my riding. Could you please tell us, Minister, what Metrolinx has on the books for Mississauga when it comes to light rail transit?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Again, my very literate friend from Mississauga knows that we have not one, not two, not seven, not 11, but 15—I almost have as many critics in opposition—15 major infrastructure projects going on. One of them that is planned is the Hurontario LRT.

This is a very vital piece because the third-largest commercial office cluster right now in Canada is in Mississauga, from the Airport Executive Park. Mississauga has emerged as one of the most dynamic commercial centres—employment centres—in Canada, and we are going to be building an LRT there so people can get to work. It will connect to our GO lines, it will help build the transportation capacity for the urbanization and renewal of downtown Mississauga led by the city and by the city council, and we're glad to have—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is for the Premier. I'd like to have a conversation with the Premier, a conversation about the truth, a conversation about integrity and accountability. The Premier and her scandal-plagued

government are failing Ontario once again by putting their own selfish interests ahead of the taxpayers. The Premier's empty rhetoric about her so-called new government rings hollow.

There's nothing new about this government. Just like the Dalton McGuinty government, Premier Wynne has chosen to bury the costs of the Oakville power plant cancellation. She's chosen to avoid accountability by knowingly parroting incorrect information.

So I ask her this: Given her record, why should anyone trust her? Why should the people of Ontario believe a word she says?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Talk about parroting, with that question over there. But, you know, we've heard a lot about Bruce Sharp, who came before the legislative committee looking into this. Listen to what Bruce Sharp, a noted energy expert that the opposition loves to go on and on about—this is what he had to say. He said, "The situation begs for these numbers to be confirmed and publicized. I can think of no better provider of this service than Ontario Auditor General Jim McCarter and his staff."

The Premier of this province, when she came in, asked the Auditor General to expand his investigation beyond Mississauga and look into Oakville. The Auditor General is undertaking this work. It is complex work; it is a complex file. Again, the way the opposition talks, I'm very, very much looking forward to their candidates coming forward and talking about their costing in the last election, Mr. Speaker, but they won't appear before the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Premier, with due respect, the people of Ontario want to hear from you, not your sidekick on this.

We know the government knows the truth and isn't sharing it with Ontarians. The Premier and her House leader can attempt to spin this every which way they please, but the facts remain clear: Cabinet was briefed on the various buckets of costs by the cabinet secretary, and they know the cost of the Oakville cancellation, just like they knew the cost of scrapping Mississauga all long. The Premier and her accomplices over there in cabinet know the truth.

The question is simple: Why not end this now, Premier? Why not end this now? Save yourself the misery, come clean and tell the truth, if you can handle it.

Hon. John Milloy: Let's take a minute to review the facts. The Progressive Conservative Party opposed the plants; we cancelled them; they screamed foul. The Progressive Conservative Party said they wanted to get to the bottom of the situation. We offered a select committee of the Legislature; they turned it down. The Progressive Conservative Party has gone on and on about access to documents. We offered to produce every single document government-wide, a much broader collection of documents that had ever been requested, and the honour-

able members across the way sat there and voted against it.

1130

I was told the other day that perhaps my analogy to a certain book was a bit saucy, so I'll say that when it comes to the gas plants, they have more positions than a yoga instructor.

MUSIC EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Music, as you know, is a critical part of a well-rounded education, and wealthy students can afford music lessons outside of the school system. I dare say that 95% of Ontario families depend on public schools to provide good-quality music instruction for their kids. The Premier knows this because when she was a trustee she fought hard to keep music programs in the school system, and so did you. Why then, today, is the provincial government pushing the Toronto District School Board to cut back music instruction in strings, band, vocals and steel drums at 300 Toronto elementary schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I want to emphasize that in fact we do think that instruction in the arts is extremely important, not just in music but also in the visual arts. Because that is very important to us, we actually fund instruction in all the arts through the School Foundation Grant.

It might interest you to know that the Toronto District School Board actually receives over \$1.2 billion in the School Foundation Grant to hire teachers to deliver programs, which include the arts. The arts, in fact, are part of the regular curriculum, and we expect that teachers will deliver the regular curriculum as it is set out in the provincial curriculum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The problem is that the government gives one bag of money but expects 10 bags of service. That one bag of money is not enough. That's why boards, as you know, have been cutting back on so many areas, including physical education, home economics and industrial arts, and cuts to the arts program, cuts to music in the past, cuts to ESL programs and deferred maintenance programs, including reading recovery. Today we hear they're going to cut back again on music instruction. The money simply is not enough to provide all these services.

When will the Premier start taking action to protect access to music education for elementary students in Toronto instead of pressuring the TDSB to cut music programs in their schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: In fact, we actually have recognized that one bag, as the member called it, or more accurately the School Foundation Grant, as I referred to it, isn't adequate. That's why, when the Premier was Minister of Education, she began the funding of additional funding for elementary specialist teachers. In fact, the Toronto District School Board has received funding for

628 specialist teachers at elementary so that they can provide the services that you have outlined: arts, music, visual arts and the other subjects that you mentioned. That is exactly why we provided Toronto and other school boards with funding for elementary specialist teachers.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the dedicated Minister of Consumer Services. Spring has finally arrived, and many homeowners are thinking about possible renovations that they might want to do to their homes. Renovations and small construction projects are great ways to stimulate the local economies and also tend to employ locals, and people buy materials locally.

Many tend to hold back on these projects as they hear horror stories from some of their neighbours, families and friends about their own renovation projects. Across the province we've heard some of the stories of some contractors leaving in the middle of a project, work not being done to an expected level or consumers being held hostage for more money to complete a project. It's because of these horror stories that I'm looking toward you, Minister, for an answer on how the ministry responds to such stories.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Indeed, and unfortunately, this is an issue that the ministry faces on a constant basis. I want to thank the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for asking the question.

This is the time of year when many families and homeowners are embarking on home renovations. Home renovations are constantly on the top 10 list of complaints at the Ministry of Consumer Services. The complaints, just to share with the House, range in topics. They include things like: quality of service, failure to provide service, not honouring contracts, services not performed. It's important to note that the ministry does take these complaints seriously, not just in educating consumers, as we do, but in investigating complaints.

I encourage all consumers to ensure that they are aware of their rights and arm themselves with the information, if they need it, from my ministry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister. I'm happy to hear that consumers have somewhere to turn when they find themselves in a terrible situation.

Can the minister, through you, Speaker, please share with us what precautions homeowners can take beforehand and how can we help ease their fears when they are considering a home renovation or repair project?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm always happy to share information on how people can be more informed and knowledgeable consumers. First, as we know, consumers need to be aware that a written contract is always the best line of defence, and under the law, any job worth more than \$50 has to have a written contract. That's something a lot of people don't know.

Second, as for details of the contract, the materials being used, the terms, the payment, all those kinds of details—and if there is agreement between the consumer and the contractor, that estimate can indeed become the contract.

Consumers should be aware they have a right to cancel work if it's not started within 30 days of when it was promised in the agreement, and consumers should remember they cannot be charged more than 10% above the amount specified in their contract unless they agree to a change. It's also recommended, of course, that some of the payment be held back until the work is completed.

Again, I encourage people to contact my ministry for more information.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to correct something that I said today. The Oakville TransCanada Energy relocation contract is 212 pages long.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member does have a right to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find it disconcerting that almost every time anything is happening in the House now, there's got to be some heckling. Come on. It's silly.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'd like to correct my record as well. During debate on Bill 34, when I pointed out that the Minister of Transportation was not aware that GO buses were ordered without seat belts, I mistakenly referred to the fact that they were safety belts, but the truth is that the minister was not aware of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You almost had me on a correct-the-record.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence on a point of order.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to mention that we have the former member of provincial Parliament from the riding of York South–Weston here, John Nunziata—the brother of city councillor Frances Nunziata.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests here.

A point of order for the member of Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: They arrived a little bit late, but I'd like to welcome the group from Prince Edward county that are here. They are the POOCH group, Patrons of Our County Hospital. They'll be rallying outside the Legislature against government cuts—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests.

USE OF PROPS IN THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Actually, I'm glad that we have everyone here. There is one thing. I have now an understanding that there could be some members holding up insulting signs or any kind of props. This is not the one that I wanted to talk to the member from Renfrew on; I already dealt with that.

This is other members who may be holding up things that are not only unparliamentary but really below what the members all here, who are classified as honourable, would do. If I do find it, I will act swiftly and I will act decisively if I am actually witnessing such activities, and I would admonish anyone that would do that.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MAJESTA TREES OF KNOWLEDGE

Mr. John Yakabuski: I rise today to bring attention to the Majesta Trees of Knowledge contest that is currently under way. The competition provides schools with an opportunity to win \$20,000 towards the building of a customized outdoor classroom.

Our Lady of Sorrows school from Petawawa in my riding submitted a plan for their outdoor classroom and was selected as one of just 10 finalists all across Canada. In making their submission, Our Lady of Sorrows had to design an outdoor learning space that would help educate their students and the public to the importance of working in concert with nature and understanding the benefits of a healthy natural environment.

As of today, Our Lady of Sorrows is in second place behind only a school from Saint John, New Brunswick. Petawawa is a lovely community. It's home to CFB Petawawa, which of course is home to the largest military base in Canada and the men and women of the Canadian Forces who protect our interests, both at home and abroad.

We're now in the final stretch of the Majesta competition, which ends on April 26. I would ask all of you, and everyone out there in Ontario, to go to majestatrees-ofknowledge.ca, take a look at the video they've prepared and then cast your vote for Our Lady of Sorrows. In that video, you'll see celebrity endorsements from former Our Lady of Sorrows student, Ben Rutz, one of Canada's finest fiddlers, and also Wojtek Wolski of the NHL's Washington Capitals.

Between now and April 26, you have the opportunity to vote once a day. If everyone across Ontario casts their vote for Our Lady of Sorrows for the Majesta Trees of Knowledge, I can assure you that on April 26 they will be victorious and they will have their outdoor classroom to show respect and knowledge of the natural environment. Let's go, Our Lady of Sorrows.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have made a comment—I think it was yesterday—about heckling people making statements. So we'll make sure that we maintain that wonderful, high, dignified level.

Members' statements.

CLEMENTINE NG

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to note the passing yesterday of Clementine Ng. People in this city live better because of Clementine's work. She was a hotel worker, an activist, a proud member of Unite Here Local 75. She was passionate in her commitment to the well-being of working people and of seniors. Whenever there was a rally for justice for the women and men working in hotels, she would be there. She would walk many kilometres in summer heat or winter's cold to support people who needed a decent wage and respect on the job.

She was tireless. Whenever I would go to seniors' events in my riding, she would be there, fundraising for seniors' services and lobbying for better pensions. Her heart was devoted to the betterment of people's lives.

I want to express condolences to her husband, Peter, and to her brothers and sisters at Local 75. They will miss her, as will I.

Speaker, I ask unanimous consent for a minute of silence to mark the passing of Clementine Ng.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Toronto—Danforth has asked for a moment of silence. I understand the member has to depart, so I'm going to ask for it to happen now, which is unorthodox, but I've spoken to the member. He's seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence on the passing. Agreed? Agreed.

Please stand.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements?

QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE
MEDAL RECIPIENTS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: The coronation of Queen Elizabeth II took place on February 6, 1952. On that day, she became the Queen of Canada, and Canadians have thanked her for her dedicated years of service. On February 22, I was proud to host a very special ceremony to honour Her Majesty for her service to our country in a tangible way, and to celebrate the deserving members of my community who have devoted themselves to the well-being of family, to community and to country. This Diamond Jubilee Medal commemorates Queen Elizabeth II's 60 years on the throne and pays tribute to her many years of service to our country. Each of the award recipients are outstanding citizens who have made exceptional contributions to their communities, to their province and to our country of Canada.

I would like to recognize here today Master Warrant Frank Atyeo, Bob Bak, Joe Grando, Rose Marciano, Peter Marcucci, Nick Pacione, Linda Paternostro and

Tony Pronto as recipients of the Diamond Jubilee Medal, and take this moment to thank each of these individuals for their hard work, their dedication and their outstanding service. It is because of the work of individuals such as these that our province is the very best place to live in Canada.

RAILWAY CITY BREWING CO.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Railway City Brewing Co. on having their signature Dead Elephant Ale voted as the Legislature's featured bold-flavoured ale for the fourth year in a row.

Railway City Brewing Co. set up shop five years ago in St. Thomas. Their signature labels, Iron Spike and Dead Elephant Ale, embody St. Thomas's railway past and, of course, reference the story of the renowned show elephant, Jumbo, who met his untimely demise on the very tracks of our fine town.

Railway City has produced a number of unique, flavourful products that have won over craft beer enthusiasts across the province. Their success is a direct result of their dedication to craftsmanship and an uncompromising focus on quality. The brewery has currently announced expansion plans which will create jobs and allow them to produce more of their fine product.

I'd like to just make a note that their cranberry ale at Christmastime is a favourite of friends and relatives of mine, and I surely help their profit during that time.

I encourage everyone here to sample St Thomas's finest ale, and once again congratulate Railway City Brewing on winning over the MPPs of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not only does the current member support, but a previous Speaker in this place used to support the St. Thomas—

Interjection: And still does.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And still does.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Miss Monique Taylor: On Monday of this week, a worker was killed on the job in Hamilton. He was struck by a metal bin as he carried out his duties. Unfortunately, this terrible tragedy is not an isolated incident. The Ministry of Labour reported there were 22 deaths and 678 critical injuries in the industrial sector last year. Each year across Canada, we average 1,000 workplace-related deaths.

This worker's death comes less than two weeks before the international Day of Mourning that we mark each year on April 28. It is a day when we pause to remember those who went to work and didn't come home, or perhaps brought home a deadly disease from their workplace. It is a day when we mourn for the dead and recommit to fight for the living. It is a day where we can reflect on the importance of Harry Arthurs's recommendations to the WSIB, such as indexing pensions so that

injured workers do not descend into devastating poverty through no fault of their own.

The Day of Mourning was started by the Canadian Labour Congress 30 years ago. It has now spread across the world, and is recognized in 80 countries.

I encourage all members to take part in their local Day of Mourning ceremonies, as they will be held across the country.

In solidarity, we mourn for the dead and fight for the living.

MINOR HOCKEY

Mr. Bob Delaney: This past weekend, three different minor hockey teams brought Ontario Hockey Federation titles home to Mississauga.

The Mississauga Jets defeated the Brantford 99ers 3-2, playing in Sault Ste. Marie to win the Bantam AA championship.

The Port Credit Storm shut out the host Niagara Falls Canucks 3-0 for the Bantam A Ontario title.

And the Mississauga Rebels won the Pee wee AAA championship Friday night in Thunder Bay, with a 6-4 win over the Nickel City Sons.

1510

The Ontario Hockey Federation Midget A Championships were held this past weekend at Vic Johnston arena in Streetsville. On Friday, Lisgar resident Johnny Bower dropped the puck to start the tournament. Johnny is the last living Toronto Maple Leaf goalie to hoist the Stanley Cup.

Mississauga's Lorne Park Ojibwa did not prevail at Streetsville, though prior to the Friday night opening game, I was able to put on my goalie equipment and take two rounds of warm-up shots with both Lorne Park and the Quinte West Hawks.

Hockey teaches young players to work as a team, to get along with each other, and to respect the other side.

Congratulations to our three 2013 championship Mississauga minor hockey clubs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Brantford 99ers went easy on you.

MILOS RAONIC

Mr. Peter Shurman: On April 7, Thornhill's own Milos Raonic won the fourth Davis Cup quarter-final match between Canada and Italy in Vancouver. Raonic's victory over Andreas Seppi gave him a 3-1 series advantage, and advances Canada to the Davis Cup semifinals. This is an historic and unprecedented win for Canada as it is the first time our country has even played in the quarter-finals at the Davis Cup.

Raonic is the highest-ranked men's singles tennis player in Canadian history. His love of the game began in Thornhill. His success has inspired many people of all ages and revitalized the game. Raonic's dedication and perseverance are important lessons that we can all learn from. A team player both on and off the courts, he has

created the Milos Raonic Foundation to help children overcome economic and physical barriers, with a focus on kids with physical disabilities and those in need of prosthetic devices.

I would like to congratulate Milos Raonic for continuing to represent Thornhill and our country with great pride on the world stage. Last November, I was honoured to present a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal to Thornhill's own international tennis star. Our community stands behind him, and we wish him continued success in the Davis Cup championship final in November and beyond.

COUNT ME IN

Ms. Dipika Damerla: This morning, I was greeted by an unusual sound as I walked into the Living Arts Centre. It was the sound of whoops of joy and excitement, and that's because the auditorium at the Living Arts Centre was full of 1,500 teenagers. They were there to attend a conference called Count Me In. The philosophy of Count Me In is empowering our young. It was fantastic to see that all these kids had organized this conference from scratch. Everything there had been done by teenagers, students from grade 8 to grade 12. It was some kind of a mix between a party and an entertainment festival and a trade show of volunteerism, because it was an opportunity for these students to actually shop around and see where they could volunteer. What a great idea to have all these not-for-profits together at the Living Arts Centre and a chance for teenagers to see first-hand where they would like to fit in.

To me, the most remarkable thing was the fact that the entire Count Me In conference had been organized by kids.

In particular, I would like to recognize the founder, Shane Feldman; Jaclyn Grossman; Jake Nothdurft; Nicole Richie; and Shane Karkheck.

With these kids, I can tell you that Ontario's future is in good hands.

LOW WATER LEVELS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: A very serious economic issue is confronting the communities and businesses on the shores of Georgian Bay. The declining water levels in the Great Lakes, particularly in Michigan and Huron, are having a devastating impact.

With all-time-low water levels, Georgian Bay marinas are being forced to dredge their harbours at the cost of tens of millions of dollars. Without the dredging, it will mean that marinas cannot operate and tourism dollars, including those from the Trent-Severn Waterway, will simply not flow this year. This will severely impact provincial coffers.

Even the Chi-Cheemaun ferry will not likely be able to operate this year between Tobermory and Manitoulin because of the low water levels.

Water intakes of municipal water systems are at risk of being exposed to damage.

Our First Nations brothers and sisters of Beausoleil First Nation are at risk of not having a ferry service to their homes on Christian Island.

We have a Great Lakes Protection Act that doesn't even address the water levels and economic opportunities.

We also have your Liberal regional tourism organizations that are useless at providing leadership assistance at a time when our tourism communities are having a very difficult time.

I ask Premier Wynne and the Ontario government to take a leadership role in a fashion similar to the state of Michigan. Please work with me and our community leaders. Without leadership assistance, many marine operators simply will not be able to last past this boating season. We need Premier Wynne to meet with business leaders and work with politicians at all levels of government to help save our boating industry on Georgian Bay.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ALZHEIMER ADVISORY COUNCIL ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE CONSEIL CONSULTATIF DE LA MALADIE D'ALZHEIMER

Mrs. Cansfield moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to establish the Alzheimer Advisory Council and develop a strategy for the research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia/ Projet de loi 54, Loi créant le Conseil consultatif de la maladie d'Alzheimer et élaborant une stratégie de traitement et de prévention de la maladie d'Alzheimer et d'autres formes de démence et de recherche en la matière.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The act establishes the Alzheimer Advisory Council for the purpose of considering matters related to informal caregivers and persons with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia and making recommendations to the minister.

The minister is responsible for developing and implementing a strategy respecting research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. The minister is required to take into consideration the reports of the Alzheimer Advisory Council and the Ontario Health Quality Council to contribute to the development and implementation of the strategy. The act

states the government of Ontario's undertaking to address issues related to Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

PETITIONS

CHILDREN'S PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there has been a dramatic increase in the use of psychiatric medication on children especially children in care or provincial custody; and

"Whereas it is an established scientific fact that psychiatric drugs cause shrinkage and related problems to with the development of the still-developing brain; and

"Whereas it is our responsibility as a society to protect and care for our children;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To create a policy statement discouraging the use of psychiatric drugs on children and send it to all Ontario clinics and mental health care facilities working with children;

"To actively monitor the rate of use of psychiatric drugs on children to ensure that it is going down;

"To amend the professional misconduct regulation under the Medicine Act so that prescribing medication to children where the use of such medication has not been specifically approved by Health Canada for their age group and purpose constitutes professional misconduct, also to alter OHIP practices such that such use is not covered."

I affix my signature in full support.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough-Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough-Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough-Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

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"Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough–Agincourt riding; and

"Whereas the commission's report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough–Agincourt community; and

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough–Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough–Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401."

I fully support the petition and give it to Jason.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a great amount of people from all across the province of Ontario, and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present the petition on their behalf.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, sent to me from the good folks in Timmins.

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children's aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children's aid societies."

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree with this more. I will affix my name to it, as I have to the many hundreds before, and give it to page Theodore to take to the Clerk.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: This petition is from the great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the private children aid's society (CAS) corporations and the courts of Ontario consume billions of Ontario's taxpayers' dollars each year; and

"Whereas there has never existed any public oversight such as that exercised by the public via the utilization of the freedom-of-information requests processes over these indescribably powerful entities; and

"Whereas the damage, much of it claimed to be gratuitous, done to children and families by the CASs and the courts can be extreme, irrevocable and effect lifelong terrible consequences; and

"Whereas the freedom-of-information request process is one of the public's most utilized and effective tools in regard to affecting transparency and accountability on the government and their 'institutions';

"So therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We respectfully petition the Ontario Legislative Assembly to make changes to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) which would result in the CASs and the courts of Ontario designated as 'institutions' as per the FIPPA so that we the public may request only certain and specific types of records from those entities."

I approve of this and I sign my signature to this petition. I will give it to page Jason.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by up to 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign it and I'm going to give it to Rabail to be delivered to the table.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I have received thousands of signatures for this particular petition, which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents and municipalities across Ontario want the ability to veto and/or plan for industrial wind turbines in their community; and

"Whereas ratepayers of Ontario want all forms of energy generation to be affordable and reliable; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want the feed-in tariff program to be eliminated; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine from the development of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's bill, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and call committee hearings immediately on the bill."

I totally agree with this particular petition and I affix my signature.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I agree with this petition. I have signed my name to it and give it to page Nicholas.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

"Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

"Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Callum.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, I have another petition from the great people of Manitoulin Island and Gore Bay, Kagawong, Evansville and M'Chigeeng.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses, and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition and I will present it to page Jason.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas municipalities are required to produce official plans that are compliant with the Places to Grow Act and the provincial growth plan; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario prescribes population growth and intensification targets throughout the provincial growth plan that must be met by municipalities; and

"Whereas even if the designated growth and intensification numbers are met, they are deemed to be minimum numbers; and

"Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board may approve densities to be located in areas not identified in the official plan, resulting in significant additional cost to the municipality because of required changes to long-term infrastructure plans, and also disrupts the character of existing communities;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013 ... that amends the Places to Grow Act, 2005 to provide that a decision made by a municipal council is final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board if the following conditions are satisfied:

"(1) The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality's official plan with respect to land that is designated for one or more of the following: stable residential area and parks and open space.

"(2) The municipal council has passed a resolution stating that the requested official plan amendment would not be in the best interests of the municipality."

I affix my signature. Speaker, this bill will be debated tomorrow afternoon.

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HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bailey: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government has announced that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. will end its Hiawatha racetrack slots operations in Sarnia on April 30, 2012; and

"Whereas the end of this program will cost the city of Sarnia 140 jobs immediately and \$1.5 million a year in gaming revenues, not to mention potentially 60,000 jobs across the province if the program is scrapped entirely; and

"Whereas there has been absolutely no consultation with the community, employees, or owner/operator of the local facility; and

"Whereas this decision is just another attack by the McGuinty-Wynne government on rural Ontario and struggling agricultural communities;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that" this "government stop risking thousands of jobs in Ontario and \$1.5 billion in potential revenue by mismanaging the racetrack slots program and focus on finding solutions to the real problems...."

I agree with this and will send it down with Addison to the table.

WIND TURBINES

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents and municipalities across Ontario want the ability to veto and/or plan for industrial wind turbines in their community; and

"Whereas ratepayers in Ontario want all forms of energy generation to be affordable and reliable; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want the feed-in tariff program to be eliminated; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine from the development of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's bill, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and call committee hearings immediately on the bill."

As I am in favour of this, I have affixed my signature to give it to page Jason.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2013, on the motion for second reading of Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This debate ended with the member from Davenport. We'll now go into two-minute responses.

Questions and comments? The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. Let me just say that I think that the Minister of Agriculture and Food has just come up with a fantastic bill to place a much higher emphasis as to how important local foods are to each and every one of us. We're all familiar with our marketplaces in every community, large and small, and how actively our local producers produce the good vegetables and fruits that we all enjoy, starting right about this time of the year but particularly in the fall of the year.

It is about time that we here in Ontario continue taking great pride in the local foods that are being produced in Ontario, and what this bill does, amongst other things, is it really promotes and celebrates the good things that are grown and made in Ontario.

I know that the Minister of Agriculture and Food's critics in the opposition parties agree with this and will be totally supportive of this bill. Now, as we know, they may have a few good, positive amendments to make to the bill. But at the end of the day, both the member from Oxford, who is the critic for the official opposition, and his close relative, the member from Timiskaming, who's the food critic for—

Interjection: Nephew.

Hon. John Gerretsen: He's your nephew? Okay. Your nephew, the critic for the NDP, will have some good, positive contributions to make this bill even better than it is.

But, you know, a lot of things have already happened with respect to this bill, and the consultation process that was started by the good Minister of Agriculture and Food will continue. At the end of the day, we should all take great pride in the food that's produced here in Ontario, and we should make the rest of the world aware of that as well, Speaker.

I look forward to the debate that's about to ensue right about now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thank you, Speaker. I much appreciate the opportunity to stand up and talk and comment not only on the Attorney General's comments but on the legislation.

You see, Speaker, some of the aspects—and I probably bring a different perspective forward when you talk about the local foods component. This is the start of a season, and many individuals in the House may not be realizing this, where a lot of the wild, natural foods that are out there, whether it's fiddleheads, which are a great opportunity—most of the fiddleheads in Ontario actually come from New Brunswick. We need to ensure that these fiddleheads—and for those who don't know about fiddleheads, they're ostrich ferns. As well, there are other things such as wild leeks. I know there are a number of locations around where wild leeks are available and they're a great opportunity. I had permission to pick wild leeks with some of my boys, and we tried to get them to find a marketplace that they could retail these wild leeks.

So you've got a number of other aspects out there that we need to look at in how it's going to be marketed and how we can promote those sorts of aspects, whether it's wild leeks and fiddleheads—and there are a couple of other things. First the wild leeks will be up, and then the fiddleheads. After that, you're going to get a number of other things as well—bulrushes or the cattails that are out there. For individuals who haven't tried them, they're actually rather interesting to have. You have to get them before they break through the leaves, when they're in the husk, and you peel it off like a cob of corn and you boil it and add salt and butter on it and it's actually a great thing.

I think the thing I'm trying to point out here is that we need to make sure that we take all of these things into consideration when we're bringing legislation forward

and look at some other aspects. Whether it's wild mushrooms, fiddleheads, bulrushes, cattails or wild leeks and some of the other things Ontario has to offer, hopefully we can all work together to make sure it's a much better province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to stand here. I'd like to make some comments on my colleague from Davenport's remarks yesterday, as well as the Attorney General and the member from Oshawa.

But I'd like to focus on my colleague from Davenport. We both spoke yesterday about the Local Food Act. He had a totally different view because he had an urban view, something a lot of farmers don't understand. Farmers are constantly frustrated because usually urban people don't understand us. My seatmate and I have a unique perspective because we can—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Together.

Mr. John Vanthof: Not really together, but we have reasoned arguments, actually, and I think together we can come up with some pretty good amendments to a very lazy bill. Because it's great to celebrate local food, and there is a lot of local food, but it would be nice to put legislation together that actually really did something to help that along, to not only increase people's awareness but their ability to get local food. So far, what we've seen from this bill is an attempt from the government to get ahead of the local food parade and take credit for it. You know what? There's more to governing than just taking credit for other people's work—way more.

So, yes, we are going to support this bill going to committee and, yes, we're going to try and make it into a real bill instead of a press release.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to congratulate all the members who spoke before me, but particularly the member from Davenport. I hope Grandma Grace is watching here today.

You speak about the educational sector. One of the aspects in the bill is what we, as a government, are trying to do here. We're going to look at requesting and perhaps directing ministries to consider procuring local foods, up to \$25,000. We're going to be looking at that.

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But at the same time, we've got to be mindful, as a government, as to what our trade obligations are. I know that previously the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane had talked about a previous bill that was introduced by the leader of the third party, but as a government, we found that that was too prescriptive. Some of the targets that were put in there would indeed affect our ability with regard to trade. We have to make sure that whatever we put forward in this House enables fair trade. We export; Ontario farmers, producers and processors export a considerable amount of produce to other jurisdictions. As a result, I think we've hit this right on the head. The nail

has been hit perfectly. It's beginning the discussion as to where we want to go.

I'm not saying there's no need for improvement, Mr. Speaker. There is always some need for improvements in any legislation that's put forward. That's why it's good to hear that the third party, or particularly that member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, is going to support this bill and try to get it to committee.

I just want to say in conclusion that I know quite a bit about local foods, Mr. Speaker. I was a manager for a local bakery in Alexandria, and I worked hard to ensure that local foods were on the shelves in our major retailers as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Davenport has two minutes.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thanks to all members who contributed to the debate here. Specifically, thank you to the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for welcoming Grandma Grace to the discussion today. Good afternoon.

Speaker, we did have a good discussion here. My colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane put forward a number of concerns that affect farmers in Ontario. Those concerns have to be listened to in this Legislature. We said quite clearly that this is a bill that is very empty. There's not much in it. Yet I do think it is an opportunity for people around this province to rally, to talk about food, because that's a discussion that has to happen in this Legislature.

I think once again we see that the people of Ontario are far out in front of the legislators in this building when it comes to food issues. People have real concerns about their food, their food safety, the future of food in this province, about supporting farmers and protecting farmland in Ontario. Speaker, it's not something that we hear about in here. This bill gives us the opportunity to have the discussion. It's a bill that I will be supporting, that New Democrats will support. We do need to get it to committee, and at that point, I would really encourage food stakeholders from across Ontario to join the discussion and put forward some real concrete proposals.

I put some of those proposals forward yesterday that I've heard. I would like to hear further debate in this chamber. I think too often we don't actually have debate in here. Why don't we have food education in our schools? Is that a good idea? I think it's a good idea. People I speak to think that's a good idea. I'd like to hear from other members if that's something we should have. Should we have food education opportunities in our schools? Should we have a garden in every school that grows food? Should we be using our kitchens in schools again to teach students food skills? These are good ideas, but these are actual ideas with some substance—something this bill, at this point, does not have. Could we talk about some of these ideas, please? Because there's a long way we need to go when it comes to food, but we're just getting started here.

I'm looking forward to more discussion. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to rise today to speak about our new Local Food Act, a bill, I think, Mr. Speaker, that is a positive signal to the agri-food sector right across the province of just how important I think all of us here in this Legislature and this government believe our agriculture industry is to each and every Ontarian.

This bill was put forward by our Premier, which is something that we don't normally get to say in this Legislature, because it is sort of unusual for the Premier to take on a portfolio on their own, in addition to the responsibilities of being Premier. I think the fact that our Premier has taken on the extra responsibility of being the Minister of Agriculture and Food is an indication that our government and our Premier take agriculture issues very seriously.

We want to send out the message to all involved in the sector, people in rural and urban Ontario, that this is a critical sector. It's a critical sector in terms of providing us with important product for our families to eat. It's a critical sector, though, as well when it comes to building a strong economy.

Agriculture has long been an important part of Ontario's economy in the past and it is today. But if you look at the future of agriculture in our economy—and I'll talk a little bit about that later—it is incredibly important to our economic future, because this is that next-generation economy. We have agri-food businesses across this province that are at the cutting edge of innovation, that are global leaders in our agri-food industry, which I don't think get talked about as often as they should be. I may well bring some examples later on in my comments of some of those really great Ontario success stories, because those companies—those Ontarians—have really earned our respect.

I don't think of this as being a rural issue. I think that in the past that's sometimes the way we kind of looked at agriculture, as a rural issue. I don't see it that way. I know we always talk about this rural-urban divide in the province, and you sometimes see that come into this place a little bit. We have the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell back here who serves a very strong agriculture area. We have the member—I can never remember all of his riding name—the Minister of Community and Social Services and former Minister of Agriculture. If I state his riding name it will take up so much time that I won't have time to make a point, but the former Minister of Agriculture also serves an area where he's very much attached to the agriculture sector.

The member for Oxford is here as well, and I very much respect his views on agriculture. The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane was participating earlier, before I spoke. I've been up to his community and I've seen—Ontarians would be surprised at how, way up in Timiskaming, somehow or other they've been able to make agriculture work and grow product up there. It is a huge Ontario success story, and they've had to work very hard to do that. It hasn't been easy, but they've worked very hard to do that. I look forward to his views as well.

I know the job of opposition is to be critics. That's why we call them critics of our legislation. Their job is to critique what we're doing as a government and try to make it better. But I also think that our critics here today, in their heart of hearts, believe this is a good thing to do. They might want us to do other things. They might want us to make it stronger. They might have other ideas that should be included in this legislation. In some cases they probably have some really good ideas as to how we can move forward. But I think they would agree that this is another positive step forward when it comes to the importance of recognizing the relevance of local food in our lives.

This is something that hasn't always been talked about, but families across Ontario more and more today are recognizing that local food is a much better way to feed our families. Again, I say this isn't a rural-urban issue.

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm trying to listen to the member from Oxford heckling me, but I can't hear what he's saying.

I think it was last Easter holiday that my wife and I had time to kill. She said, "We've got to go out"—she grew up in the Clarington area, and she loves going to those markets out there. There's a market out in Clarington called White Feather Farms, which we visited. I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, it was absolutely jam-packed, and I almost guarantee you that most of the people there were probably urban dwellers who were going out to get some respite from the city and at the same time pick up some fresh product for their families. It was actually quite a nice outing. It was a great location. We got some great fresh food to bring home to our boys to eat. Our boys are athletes; they need that fresh food, those fresh vegetables and fruits and those kinds of things.

When I see farmers' markets like that—this is really a market, but it's fresh food; it's local food that's grown there—they're so successful and they're always packed. I think that speaks to the demand in Ontario for this great product that we produce here in Ontario.

I also think that this is important to rural and urban dwellers alike, because it's so important to our economy to promote our agriculture and agri-food sectors in Ontario. I remember during my time as Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, having the opportunity to travel out to Cobourg—and the critics may be familiar with this company called Bakkavor Foods. It's a company that set up their national headquarters in Cobourg. They produce fresh food that they then market through, I believe, the Loblaws chain across Canada, but their head office and their operations are out of Cobourg. They plan to start in Ontario and they're going to go across Canada, and then they plan to market to the US. They're creating hundreds of jobs in Cobourg today, and I'm very delighted that we were able to help them out with a grant from the Eastern Ontario Development Fund some time ago, which helped get them up and going and attracted them to the Cobourg area.

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That's an example of a company that's looking at the cutting edge of where demand is going because, God knows, Mr. Speaker, the way many of us here in this Legislature—and I think most Ontarians—work today, we don't have the time we used to have to go home and always prepare fresh meals for our kids and have an hour or so to cook a fresh meal. These folks are providing fresh food that we can bring home and feed to our families, food that's healthy, fresh, natural and accommodates our families. I look at that as another Ontario success story.

I sometimes think we take for granted the fact that we in this province have some of the safest, healthiest, best-quality food anywhere in the world.

I had the opportunity, again when I was Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, just this last January to travel with the Premier—Premier McGuinty at the time—to China on a trade mission that focused very much on the agri-food industry. I've got to tell you that when you look at places around the world like China, they do not take fresh, safe food for granted. In fact, there's a huge demand there for food that Ontario can produce that can give their population the comfort of knowing that they're feeding their family food that's going to be very, very healthy.

I want to share with the members and those listening today across the province some examples of some of the companies in the agri-food industry that are doing really, really well. They're selling product here for the most part, but they've got incredible potential to sell around the world. I'm reminded of a company called Canadian Dairy Manufacturing. They really impressed me because everywhere we went in China, they were signing contracts. In fact, a good proportion of the overall—I think it was close to \$700 million, if I remember, of contracts signed, and at least half of them were from this company, because what they're doing is they're producing high-end infant formula using Canadian milk ingredients that is seen worldwide as the safest baby formula in the world. We don't want to dwell on the negative, but China had some huge challenges with that a number of years ago. This creates a huge opportunity for this company that's now marketing abroad, taking perhaps the best-quality infant formula in the world and taking it to other parts of the world that really need it.

I was really surprised as well to meet with the Ontario Ginseng Growers Association, who accompanied us over there. I had no idea how big Ontario was when it comes to the world market for ginseng. In fact, we produce the highest-quality ginseng in the world, and 90% of our product is exported to Hong Kong and Taiwan. We're talking about 2.3 kilograms that we produce annually. This is a huge market. What's interesting about this market, too, is that it's an example of the innovation that exists among Ontario's farmers and farming community and agricultural community, because many of those that are producing ginseng now were former tobacco farmers who have seen the market, seen where that is going, and

have transferred over to this ginseng market that's grown so much and is such a huge global success story for Ontario, one that I think most Ontarians would not know because the market for ginseng here in Ontario is good, but the market to export is even better.

I want to just mention another company that accompanied us. There were a number of wine companies that accompanied us. We have such a successful wine industry here in this province, something we can be very, very proud of. Pillitteri Estates Winery also accompanied us, and I had the honour of opening with them their Canadian Lifestyle Centre, where they're highlighting their world-class icewine. In fact, the former Minister of Agriculture is nodding his head, because he's very familiar with this industry—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The number one icewine.

Hon. Brad Duguid: They're number one in the world when it comes to icewines, and there are so many different-quality icewines that they produce. That's another great agri-food success story for Ontario that we should be very, very proud of. It doesn't matter where in the province you live—whether you live in my community of Scarborough or you live in Timiskaming—Cochrane. It doesn't matter what you do. These are important success stories that impact the lives of every single one of us.

I also want to share, in the short time I have left, a couple of stories about innovation in this sector—local food innovation. I mentioned that my wife likes to go out to Clarington, because she kind of grew up in that area. There's a company there called Algoma Orchards. When I read about them, I was totally impressed. These are the Gibson and Kemp families, that began growing apples there in—I think it was 1964; I think I was two years old when they began this business. They're pretty much a largely independent business.

They set up a state-of-the-art, automated fresh-juice-and-apple-cider facility in 2010 which offers numerous bottling options, sold under both Algoma Orchards' label and a variety of other private labels. They're offering 22 distinct-quality grades of apples that go into this operation. Their imaging equipment categorizes 54 images per apple per second. I know that kind of sounds boring, probably, to those people listening, and a little too technical, but it's actually world-class innovation happening right in Durham, right in Clarington, in our agri-food industry, by a company that was started by a couple of families of apple growers that are now doing all kinds of juice. Again, they're seen as among the best in the world. They can now store up to 1.2 million apples in controlled environments, something that I would say probably 15 or 20 years ago would have been impossible to do, and they've won a number of awards for their innovation.

In the six minutes or so I have left, I want to talk a little bit as well about how local food can take place even in urban areas. I think of my local hospital, Scarborough Hospital, who were honoured in 2012 with the Local Food Champion Award of Kostuch Media Ltd. They

were awarded that for changing over their menu to ensure that a good percentage of their menu that they provided—we all hear about hospital food and how bad it is, and one of the reasons is, it has always probably been pretty prepackaged stuff, but not anymore. Hospitals are starting to get it. They're starting to really recognize the need to provide good customer-patient service. They're also recognizing how fresh, healthy local food can impact health outcomes. When you go into a hospital, you would think that they would have known that 20 years ago, but they're getting it now. In Scarborough Hospital, they've changed over their menu. A good proportion of the food that they're using—and they're maximizing this to the best possible—is locally grown fresh produce and food—

Ms. Cindy Forster: From Ontario, I hope.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Locally grown, from a community close by, which is really important—which is the way to go. That's one hospital—and I think the member opposite is nodding her head, so her local hospital, I expect, might be into that as well, and there are probably many others.

That's really what this act, in my view, is all about: It's about awareness. It's not so much forcing people to do things; it's opening people's eyes up to the opportunities, the benefits and sometimes the cost-effectiveness, too, of thinking local, of taking advantage of those local opportunities—and, in the case of the health care system, getting better opportunities.

In the case of our education system—the Minister of Education is here—we need our young people to be healthy in the classroom, and I can guarantee you: If they're eating fresh, locally grown food, they're going to be healthier. Their minds are going to be healthier, they're going to learn better, we're going to get better results, and at the same time we're driving our local agriculture economy here. We're creating jobs in our own province for our own people in our own communities. We're reducing the need to transport food from one end of the province to the other, or from one end of North America to the other, or from one end of the world to the other side of the world.

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We don't mind doing that with our products when the need is there, because we have some of the best products in the world. So I'm not saying we don't want to export food or that food trade is a bad thing; it's not at all. But when we have the choice of having our locally grown food here in Ontario, we need to recognize the fact that there's no better food anywhere else on the planet.

As I said earlier, I was able to have the privilege of serving as the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. Having the opportunity to travel into other markets—I've got to tell you, our reputation globally for having healthy, fresh, safe food is second to none. And this is a reputation that we ought to—and I know that the minister of economic development and jobs is seriously looking at that as he looks at our trade policies—we need to continue to make agri-food one of our top priorities.

I think we're second or third now in North America in terms of our agri-food cluster here in this province.

That's phenomenal. Seven hundred thousand Ontarians are working in this sector today. That's a lot of families, a lot of workers, that are benefiting from our agri-food sector. I think it's a \$34-billion contribution to our economy as a whole, to our gross domestic product.

This is not a small industry. This is big industry. This rivals our auto sector, in many ways, to the significance that it has on the economy. In fact, when I used to talk to the former Minister of Agriculture, he would tell me that he thinks it's even greater, but I don't know about that. I don't want to get into a debate about agriculture versus auto; they're both important. They're both really important. But agriculture is a huge industry, hugely important to our economy.

I want to close by saying that I have a certain attachment to this that most members in this Legislature would probably be surprised about. Even the member for Oxford would be surprised at this. He knows I drive a pickup truck, so I do have those rural roots somewhere deep within me. My family was very much involved in apple growing in the Collingwood area, Thornbury area. One of my memories as a young person is, whenever they came into town—and they always hated to do that because they were afraid to drive on the 401. They really didn't want to get into the hustle and bustle of the city at all. But when they would come to visit, they would always bring that bushel or two of fresh apples. I've got to tell you: When you eat that fresh food, there is absolutely nothing as good tasting as a fresh apple. When you go to the grocery store, it has been there for a while; it has probably travelled from somewhere. If you can get fresh-grown apples from Ontario, there is nothing better anywhere in the world than that.

So let me close by saying to the members opposite: While I recognize the need for you to do your jobs as critics, I think, by and large, this is a bill that we can all support, that we can all work together on. It may not go as far as you want it to go, it may not do everything that it could do, but I think it's a good thing for our agri-food sector in Ontario. I look forward to further debate on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to give a few comments on the government's Bill 36, the Local Food Act. It's interesting. We just heard from our member, the minister of colleges, universities and trades. I thought it was interesting: He talked about awareness.

Awareness actually has to start in the home. It can be perpetuated through proper implementation in the classroom. I say that because, prior to October 6, 2011, I was vice-president of Ontario Agri-Food Education, which is the child, if you will, of a provincial program called Agriculture in the Classroom. This is really where it needs to go.

Bill 36 is a good start, but for goodness' sake, it doesn't go far enough. We need to be able to have food literacy in our classroom. That's where I'd like to applaud our agriculture and rural affairs critic, Ernie Hardeman, because he has been very astute. He incorpor-

ated into our discussion paper, Respect for Rural Ontario, the need for food literacy. The fact of the matter is, people need to understand where their food is coming from, because it's quite sad, you know: People may think they're eating an apple in January and they're doing a good thing for Ontario's agriculture and food industry. The fact of the matter is, depending on where the apple came from and the timing of the season, it could very well have been imported into this province. So we need to appreciate how to eat locally in season, and go so much further and appreciate our farmers. That's why Agriculture Week in no way can be replaced by Local Food Week. By introducing a second week, you're going to be causing commodity organizations to possibly pick and choose.

I was general manager of the Ontario Dairy Goat Cooperative—a small marketing budget—and we're always going to be celebrating the farmer. Now you're going to be forcing us to rethink how we spend our money. So we have to think about this a little bit further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to focus my comments today on a comment that the member across the way—I apologize; I forgot the individual's area—but just a positive signal, and it is a positive signal. I want to talk a little bit about a particular program which some individuals have hit on and the importance of actually having these programs, talking about foods in our schools and how we can impact a young adult's life and essentially build self-values within themselves.

There's a particular program at the high school in Desbarats, CASS, and a lot of their students from the surrounding areas, from Blind River, along with Desbarats, Bruce Mines and those areas—they all participate at this school. There's this one program called Planting Seeds of Hope. It's a program that is geared and run by Patricia Wynter and Dan Boileau. Kids participate in actually planting their foods and caring for them, and what it does is, it really gives them a sense of ownership. They really care for this area; kids are developing more skills as far as interacting with themselves. They go out of their way, where they're creating life. They're not only just creating life, they're caring for it.

So there are positive things that can actually come out of this bill. We will be supporting this bill.

Applause.

Mr. Michael Mantha: However, you have to also listen and not just clap your hands, because there have been very good suggestions that have been made by some of our colleagues on this side. We would expect you to hear those voices and we would expect you to listen to those ideas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm delighted to respond to the very good comments of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Farmers feed cities, but they also need cities, and the consumers in cities and elsewhere

who consume their food. We in Ontario are blessed because we produce the best-tasting, most nutritious and safest food in the world, without a doubt. We're the envy of the world.

I agree with some of the members who spoke about the importance of education and doing that. If you're going to celebrate what's good, you want to do that in ways that don't turn people off, that don't force a whole set of new regulations on people so that they have a response that maybe is less than positive. You want to work with them together, and this bill certainly does that.

Food sovereignty is an important issue, having control about one's own food needs and not being dependent on other countries. Because when things get tough—global warming and everything else—those markets that we've come to unfortunately rely on may not be there. So we need to be growing our own food.

The best-known brand in Ontario, from a marketing perspective, is Foodland Ontario. You know, "Good things grow in Ontario"—number 2. You know what number 1 is? McDonald's. Do we have a lot of work to do yet—so we need to get at it.

You know, 68% of all the product that's produced is sold to processors. We're number 1 in the country. There are over 3,000 processing firms and 77% of all the processors in Canada are right here in Ontario. It's a great industry, and we should support it. This act helps us to do that.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I certainly listened to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I'm sure he drives his truck around Scarborough. But the whole point here is that Bill 36, about local food, is important. I think what it's trying to do is change the channel, unfortunately, from the great work done by a former colleague here—from Perth, I think—Bert Johnson. So I pay respect to the work done on the whole idea of Agriculture Week, I think it was referred to.

I also have respect for the member who just spoke, the Minister of Community and Social Services and former Minister of Agriculture. But importantly, I'm waiting in anticipation for the member from Oxford, who served as Minister of Agriculture in the government, and I know members in our caucus who are very much related to the community of agriculture.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: He had them all—the member from Kingston is speaking up. That's an indication of how disconnected the Liberal caucus really is. They announced that the minister would be the Minister of Agriculture and then a separate one for rural affairs, and left out food. So they really didn't get the whole mandate of OMAFRA, which is the whole issue that should be debated. They're changing the channel with a substantially tokenistic venture into local food—the 100-mile diet and all those things that have been talked about for some time.

But our current critic Mr. Hardeman will bring some content to the debate and, I think, a commitment to agriculture that needs to be completely reassured, not having someone who's living in a penthouse somewhere here in Toronto trying to run rural Ontario. This certainly sends the wrong message around the commodity tables I go to during the times that agriculture has to talk about issues. But we're all here for the right reasons. We respect the farmers who grow the food that we eat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has two minutes.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the members from Huron—Bruce and Algoma—Manitoulin, the Minister of Community and Social Services and, finally, the member from Durham for their comments. I think, by and large, what was interesting is that just about every speaker, except the last, talked about the future and making sure we focus on education. I think that's interesting. I think it's important, as well, that each and every one of us does that.

The member from Huron—Bruce has some expertise in this area. She said she was vice-president of agri-food education. She talked about "food literacy," which is an interesting term, and I agree. As somebody who grew up in a time when, really, food wasn't talked about in school, I've learned a lot in this position, working with some of my colleagues on this side and on the other side of the House who live in communities that, by and large, rely on agriculture.

The member from Algoma—Manitoulin talked about a program called Planting Seeds of Hope, again, focusing on young people, focusing on kids and the importance of growing food and the ability to be self-sufficient—something that I think is really, really interesting.

The Minister of Community and Social Services—I've got to tell you, I listened very carefully to what he said. I listened even more carefully to what he sang. I'm not so sure your future is in singing, Minister, but I've been watching, with my wife, the show *The Voice* of late. Maybe with a little bit of training, you could go on that show, because it seems to be getting more and more popular.

Interjection.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member opposite is doing one of these, so she's going to trade for you.

I just want to end. The member from Durham was his typically negative self. He's a friend of mine—he's a hockey player—but he doesn't have the rosier disposition around this place. At the same time, one would hope that he, too, votes for this legislation, because it's good for Ontario; it's good for our agri-food industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 36, the Local Food Act. I think introducing a food act is an opportunity. A food act is an opportunity to address the real challenges we are facing in our food system, to look at the system from field to fork and see what is working and where the system can be improved.

It's an opportunity to address the challenges our farmers are facing, such as red tape, spiralling hydro costs and the fact that government has become increasingly urban-focused; to look at the fact that our small abattoirs are closing; to examine the skills shortages in agriculture and food processing—challenges that are preventing our agribusinesses and our food processors from expanding.

Unfortunately, as Sustain Ontario said last time this bill was introduced, the Local Food Act introduced by this government missed many opportunities. The first Local Food Act that this government introduced had a great name, but it was all fluff. After four months of the Legislature being prorogued and organizations and members of the opposition pointing out that the bill didn't accomplish anything, the government has introduced essentially the same bill.

There is still nothing of substance. There is nothing in the bill that would make a significant impact on growing, availability or consumption of local food. I think it's very unfortunate the government didn't listen to groups like Sustain Ontario, which took the time to really look at our agriculture industry and our food system and put forward proposals that would have had a positive impact. They were asked to lead a consultation, which they did. In April 2012, they released a draft Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy. It contained 81 specific actions or strategies that they felt the government should consider, and they provided examples of policies and policy-related activities that would support each one of these 81 actions. All of that work, all of that consultation and there was only one of those initiatives reflected in this bill: just government procurement.

In July, Sustain Ontario released drafting notes they prepared for the government which addressed food, education, land use planning, farm stewardship and ecological practices and reducing waste in our food system. They provided a summary of what they'd hoped they would see in the food act, which was endorsed by almost 80 different local food groups, companies and farmers. It stated that the following three key points needed to be addressed in the food act:

- ensure that all Ontarians have access to the means to obtain safe, healthy, local, culinarily acceptable food;
- provide Ontarians with the information, knowledge, skills and resources and relationships to support healthy eating and healthy choices where they live, work, learn and play;
- protect and promote a diverse and sustainable food production system that contributes to an equitable and sustainable economy.

Again, the only thing this bill attempts to address is the government procurement portion. There is nothing to recognize the many parts of our food system, nothing to meet the request for more food education and providing people with skills and knowledge to support healthy eating habits; nothing to increase access for Ontarians to local food or address the economic impact of our food system.

I want to commend Sustain Ontario for looking at the food system as a whole and for putting forward a

proposal to strengthen the entire system, starting on our farms.

In her remarks on this bill last week, the Minister of Agriculture talked about food from farm gate to dinner plate. We know that food doesn't start at the farm gate. It starts with the hard work of farmers in the barns and in the fields. If we don't address the challenges the farmers are facing, as well as those with distribution, processing and access to local food, we cannot really have a meaningful impact.

It is unfortunate the government didn't listen to agriculture groups such as the Christian Farmers or the National Farmers Union, who, in their proposal, addressed the need to bring more young people into agriculture, protecting our environment and ensuring our farms are financially viable.

In their commentary last fall, the OFA laid out what they felt should be included in the food act, such as adoption of market structures to enhance farmer empowerment in the marketplace through value-added initiatives; farmers' markets and co-operatives; reintroduction of food and agriculture in the school curriculum; and a modern and efficient system for storage, transportation and distribution of food.

But it's not just agriculture organizations that were asking for a more substantial food act. The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable wrote to the Premier before the introduction and asked that she "broaden the act's scope in order to make it a meaningful and comprehensive policy that is able to address a wide range of food issues in Ontario."

The Canadian Environmental Law Association took the time to draft a model food act, and I want to commend them for all the work they put into creating that and thank them for sharing it with us.

Following the introduction, they issued a news release which said, "CELA welcomes the introduction of the government's local food bill yesterday but notes that some additional amendments would improve the bill, as outlined in the CELA's model food bill." The release went on to say, "Joseph Castrilli, counsel at CELA, notes that 'the bill, although slightly improved from its previous iteration, would significantly benefit from stronger legislative language, greater accountability, and a broader scope.'"

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Mr. Speaker, I understand their disappointment. The model local food act drafted by the Canadian Environmental Law Association was 28 pages long, fully researched and properly drafted, and you will be aware that we managed to get about a page and a half in the one the government has introduced. It contained proposals to enhance government coordination by establishing an interministerial committee requiring the minister to look at barriers to production, distribution and consumer markets, as well as barriers that limit access by consumers to local food stocks. Their model food act included proposals to increase food education and food literacy. The section on local food procurement required public

sector organizations and ministries to increase their procurement of local sustainable or local organic food annually until such procurements constituted a percentage of the overall food budget specified through relevant targets—set targets and try to achieve them.

We appreciated all these ideas that these organizations put forward, and I'm disappointed that they don't see their work reflected in this bill and that the government has missed an opportunity to implement those initiatives—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Welland has a point of order.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'd ask the Clerks to do a quorum call.

Interjection: Speaker, we do not have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would call for a quorum—a five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): We can continue the debate. The member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: We appreciated all the ideas that these organizations put forward, and I'm disappointed that we don't see that work reflected in this bill and that the government has missed the opportunity to implement those initiatives which would have strengthened our food system.

On March 28, with the reintroduction of the Local Food Act, a number of organizations wrote joint letters to the Premier to share their thoughts about what was missing in this bill. The letter came from—and I list them here—the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, Food Share, Sustain Ontario, sustainable food production, Food Forward, Toronto Food Policy Council, Holland Marsh Growers' Association, Organic Council of Ontario, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and Ontario Farm Fresh. In the letter, they said, "Premier, we also feel the Local Food Act can and should do more than promote awareness and strive to improve procurement."

The letter went on to explain a number of issues that these 11 organizations agreed needed to be addressed in the food act, and I want to share a few of those quotes from that letter.

The first quote is, "We believe the key to really accomplishing the goals of stronger food systems in Ontario lies in improving the basic food literacy of all Ontarians."

The second one: "Likewise, a Local Food Act should also address the very fundamental issue of food access—the ability of all Ontarians to procure nutritious and culturally acceptable food at all times."

The third one: "Premier, we hope that you will also extend the focus of Bill 36 to encompass regional economic development opportunities."

And finally: "We feel that it is important to emphasize that Bill 36 can realize several environmental goals."

I'm also disappointed that we don't see many of these ideas that we put forward in our agriculture, food and rural affairs white paper, *Paths to Prosperity: Respect for Rural Ontario*. We proposed a comprehensive Ontario food act that would not only have the government show leadership in local food procurement, but would help our farmers, food processors and agribusinesses by reducing red tape and supporting our Ontario food system.

As we state in our white paper, to have an impact, the legislation needs to address our entire food system from field to fork, not farm gate to dinner plate, and contain real, meaningful changes. Our Ontario food act would also include our proposals for a dedicated fund for our business risk management program and the one-window access to government for farmers and agribusinesses.

We laid out our real changes that would have strengthened our agriculture industry, increased access to local food and helped our food processors, but the government has chosen not to incorporate any of our proposals. In fact, this is essentially the same bill that was introduced last fall. At that time, local food group Food Forward said, "The Local Food Act must be strengthened to create further goals, targets, research, and support for hospitals, universities, and all other public institutions, to increase the amount of fresh, local, and ecologically produced food, as suggested by Sustain Ontario."

In their blog, the Christian Farmers said, "The proposed Local Food Act is one that can be considered from more angles than it is currently envisioned." They went on to say that "the local food movement is about more than government procurement targets. For example, farmers focused on supplying farmers' markets, community-shared agriculture and agri-tourism are all important parts of local food production. With some consideration, we may find that the Local Food Act may be able to provide additional tools for these producers to succeed in the long term."

In fact, even the Premier acknowledged—and I think this is very interesting—that the Local Food Act introduced last fall was weak when in her leadership campaign she committed to introducing a strengthened Local Food Act. But the new bill that was introduced a few weeks ago still has no substance, and most of what is contained in the bill the government already had power to do.

The bill states that the minister shall consult before establishing a goal or target. There is absolutely nothing that would prevent the minister from consulting right now without the bill. In fact, we wish she would do a little more of that. We wish she had consulted with the farming community before allowing the new Ontario Tire Stewardship fees for agricultural tires, which will result in massive increases. The bill states, "The minister may, to further the purposes of this act"—and I want to emphasize the word "may"—"establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food." That's something that she, again, can do right now; she doesn't need a bill to do that. This is an area that I'm going to address later in more detail, but I want to make it clear that this is

something that the Minister of Agriculture and Food could have done two months ago. Since there is no requirement in legislation to actually achieve the goals, there is absolutely no need to put it into legislation.

The bill requires a report on local food, but there is nothing to prevent the government from producing that right now. In fact, it seems logical to me that before creating a Local Food Act, you would look at the status of local food in Ontario—what has already been done and whether it is actually working. If the government had done a proper job in creating a local food act, they should be able to provide us with that report today. The fact that they haven't demonstrates that this bill is much more about public relations than it is about making Ontario's food system work. In fact, the only thing in the whole bill that requires legislation is in the creation of a Local Food Week, which unfortunately the government has timed to replace the existing Ontario Agriculture Week.

In 1998, Bert Johnson, the MPP from Perth, introduced a private member's bill which established the week before Thanksgiving as Ontario Agriculture Week. For the past 15 years, that has been the week when we recognize the contributions of Ontario's farmers, from the statements in this Legislature to the blue tractors that have been on the front lawn to the events in rural communities across Ontario. As a former Liberal agriculture minister, Steve Peters, said, "It is important that we all take time to reflect on where our food and agricultural products come from and recognize the hard work of our farmers."

We recognize the importance of celebrating local food, but it should not be at the expense of recognizing the many contributions of our farmers, not just for the food they produce, but how hard they work and their contribution to our economy and their work as stewards of the land.

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Despite this, the Local Food Act, if passed as the Minister of Agriculture introduced it, would replace Ontario Agriculture Week. Yesterday, the parliamentary assistant of agriculture and food asked, "What's wrong with that?" I want to ensure that all the members of the Legislature understand why this week matters.

Ontario Agriculture Week is about recognizing farmers who stay up all night caring for a sick animal. It's about recognizing the farmers who worked together to ensure that after last summer's drought, farmers got the hay they needed to feed their animals. It's about recognizing that farmers work from sunrise to sunset and then far into the night to get their work done before it rains. It's about recognizing farmers who don't have weekends or holidays, because even on Christmas the cows need to be milked, the pigs need to be fed and the eggs need to be collected. It's about recognizing that after all that, the farmer still makes time to help the community as a neighbour in need.

Ontario Agriculture Week is about recognizing that even when times get tough, when they are losing money on every hog, when frost kills the blossoms on the fruit

trees and when weather destroys the crops they worked so hard to produce, our farmers keep going because we depend on them. We rely on them not just to put fresh food on our tables but as the backbone of our rural communities and a major part of our provincial economy.

In 2010, an OFA news release entitled "Ontario Celebrates More than Food During Agriculture Week" stated, "This week encourages Ontarians to reflect on the impact of agriculture for the province—not just as a source for food, but also as an important industry that provides reliable economic stimulus for Ontario."

The Ontario Agriculture Week bill actually starts off with a quote: "Ontario's agriculture industry has always been and continues to be an important part of the province's economy."

The legislation goes on to say, "The food and other agricultural products that sustain our lives are the result of the skill, hard work and dedication of Ontario's farming communities and farm families. It is important to recognize and acknowledge this ongoing contribution by Ontario farmers to the quality of life of all our citizens."

The Ontario PC caucus believes in Ontario Agriculture Week and we believe that we should continue to celebrate our farmers the week before Thanksgiving, as we have for the last 15 years. I don't know whether the part-time Minister of Agriculture and Food didn't know that it was Ontario Agriculture Week or simply didn't understand the importance of recognizing the farmers. Either way, I have to say that I'm very disappointed. This government continues to forget about the importance of rural Ontario and agriculture until it's time for a photo opportunity.

I know that the minister has been hearing from people concerned about her proposal to replace Agriculture Week. One person said in an email—I got these emails, and they were copies of the ones that were sent to the Premier—"Our very existence relies on these hard-working farming individuals. Please do not devalue their service by removing the essence of the week."

Another one said, "Agriculture is much more than 'local food' and requires broader recognition. Ontario producers export significant amounts of the product it produces, providing huge economic benefit back to the Ontario economy through processing, transportation and other services—far beyond what local foods provide in return.

"By replacing Agriculture Week with Local Food Week, it weakens the connection consumers have with food and the daily efforts ... Ontario producers provide" to our economy.

I'm pleased to announce that the PC caucus will be putting forward an amendment to save Ontario Agriculture Week, and I hope that all members of this Legislature will support that amendment. We will move Local Food Week so we have a separate week to celebrate the food that our farmers grow, as well as all the other people involved in our local food system—people involved in our farmers' markets, our local food organization and our Ontario Food Terminal.

It is a time to recognize the restaurants that make the effort to source from Ontario's farms, such as Cowbell here in Toronto, SixThirtyNine in Woodstock, Cedars and Co. in Ottawa, and Loblaws with Ontario corn-fed beef.

In addition to that amendment, I expect many agriculture and local food organizations will also have proposals for amendments. Already we've heard from a number of people who have expressed concerns about the areas that have been missed, such as food literacy and the challenges with food distribution, which I will be addressing later. I look forward to hearing from more of these groups and working with them to put forward amendments to try and make this a real Ontario food act, as we have proposed.

As I said earlier, this food act has missed some wonderful opportunities. Last year, as the first step in preparing our white paper on agriculture, food and rural affairs, we launched an extensive survey of farmers, agribusinesses and food processors. We recognize that all of these sectors are interrelated, and to have a strong food system, we need to look at the system as a whole and the challenges impacting each part. It's not enough to introduce legislation with a nice title, set some goals and hope that the public sector will "aspire" to meet them.

We reached out to the farmers. We talked to the agricultural organizations and the local food groups. We met with the Ontario Independent Meat Processors. We consulted with food processors. We held round tables with agribusinesses. We asked them the biggest challenges their organization was facing: What was that biggest challenge? We asked them what the government's priority should be. We asked food processors how much local food they were using; if they were sourcing items from other jurisdictions, and why; and what would make them use more local food. We asked about trade issues and staffing. We asked about what could strengthen their industry.

They told us there were some real challenges that their industries are facing, and some of them are caused, Mr. Speaker—and I'm sure that you would understand that—by the government. Every single one of the sectors told us that government red tape and paperwork is a significant challenge. All of them said they were impacted by increasing hydro costs. We heard from agribusinesses that they are worried about the impact of the declining horse racing industry.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about one of these challenges, because I think that this bill was a great opportunity for the government to address them. It was an opportunity to acknowledge the problems they have created and show that they have changed, but again, that opportunity was missed. As I said, the biggest challenge our farmers are facing is red tape and government paperwork. In our agricultural survey last summer, over 77% of farmers said that red tape was increasing. That's consistent with the findings of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the CFIB.

When we asked the biggest challenges farmers were facing, one responded, "The mountain of paperwork and

overwhelming lack of clarity in regulation means I spend too much time doing paperwork and not enough time scouting my fields and doing research and innovation to move my farm forward."

Another said, "Regulations, and enforcement of those regulations by people who do not understand agriculture."

Another said, "Red tape, plain and simple. Detracts focus from the job at hand, and I am always worried someone from one of the ministries will show up unexpectedly, use all of my time for that day (and probably many others, responding and complying with their whimsical findings) and cost me yet more money."

In their submission on the Local Food Act, the National Farmers Union said, "The regulatory burden pushes small and medium-scale food operations, including small abattoirs, out of business."

When we asked processors about what products they had challenges sourcing from Ontario, one said, "Locally grown foods and products. Your regulations, for instance, killed the Ontario cheese industry."

Recently, Darcy Higgins of Food Forward wrote, "A review of regulations that hamper small food enterprise could also lead to the creation of new jobs in Ontario. In rural, suburban, and urban parts of the province, entrepreneurs are finding unclear and outdated, intelligence-challenging regulations that don't affect health, safety, or the environment but hamper their ability to undertake a business venture." When I met with Darcy, he told me about the red tape challenges that food entrepreneurs here in Toronto are facing.

Despite all of this, there is absolutely nothing in this act that addresses the regulatory burden that our farmers, agribusinesses and food processors are facing.

In her leadoff, the Minister of Agriculture and Food talked about consultations that her government had done. After this bill was introduced the first time, CBC Radio interviewed an Ottawa farmer, Robin Turner, who attended one of the round tables, and he said, "Another big part of it I think that the Local Food Act doesn't really address is increasing access to all the services and transforming food. For example, in Dan's case, getting abattoirs that are closer and potentially more smaller abattoirs."

He went on to say, "One of the hard things in Ontario—and I brought this up in our meeting with the minister; he didn't really say much about it—is that this province had a thriving meat processing and dairy cheese industry 30 or 40 years ago. When I was a kid, when I grew up, there were five cheese factories within half an hour of where I lived. And they are all gone because of regulation."

1640

In our recent white paper, the PC caucus put forward a number of initiatives to address this regulatory burden. We would review licences, permits and certificates to see which ones could be combined and which ones could be eliminated.

In our survey, agribusinesses found they had to have up to 20 licences and permits to operate, each with its

own application form and—you can be sure, Mr. Speaker—each with its own fee. The government claims to have cut red tape, but farmers and agribusinesses and food processors tell us it's increasing. In fact, 85.7% of the agribusinesses said it was increasing.

We would reduce the regulatory burden by at least 33% over three years, and if we miss our target, cabinet—including the Premier—would have their pay docked. There's no better way to get people to comply, Mr. Speaker.

In our survey, we asked farmers what ministries they deal with, and of course they said OMAFRA. But they also reported dealing with the Ministries of the Environment, Natural Resources, Finance, Labour, Health, Energy, Transportation, Municipal Affairs, Northern Development, Aboriginal Affairs and the Ministry of Culture.

More disturbing were the reports from farmers having to apply to different ministries on the same issue and getting different answers. It shouldn't be up to farmers to sort out a dispute between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of the Environment.

Almost two years ago, we proposed a one-window access to government for farmers and agribusinesses. Four months later, the government copied that commitment, but they have done nothing to actually achieve it. We would implement it.

Internal documents from OMAFRA show that in their staff consultation they weren't even looking at the one-window approach. At a staff town hall meeting last October, the ministry asked, "What is the strongest opportunity you see to provide clients with a 'no wrong window' approach to accessing the full range of government services, expertise and products?" One of the answers they received from staff was that they should implement a one-window approach.

I might point out that later in that consultation, the ministry asked how they could increase employee satisfaction and engagement, and the response was that they should listen to the staff—and in this case, we agree.

Implementing the one-window approach, reducing regulations and reviewing licences are three steps to reduce red tape and regulation which could have been implemented in this Local Food Act—another missed opportunity.

In our survey of food processors, one of the groups that said they were particularly challenged by red tape was local abattoirs. We also heard from the Ontario Independent Meat Processors that the number one reason they were contacted by their members in 2011 was for help dealing with government regulations.

Our first priority, as it always has been, is food safety, but we need to look at redundant regulations, which have no value and are forcing abattoirs out of business. Ontario has already lost many of its small abattoirs. There are whole regions that no longer have local abattoirs. Cutting red tape is only a small part of the solution, but it would be a good first step.

When we asked processors about the biggest challenge their company was facing, one said it was how to get the

government to recognize the huge benefit of small meat processors in the province. Many people have pointed out that it is impossible to have local meat without our local abattoirs, but this act does nothing to address that problem.

It also does nothing to address the problem of food distribution. Many groups across Ontario have recognized the need to bring local food together in order to market it and improve food distribution. Sustain Ontario recently hosted a seminar on this topic and said, "Food hubs can be an integral part in fulfilling the missing link of a local food system and alleviate barriers that often highlight the limited resources in the who, what, where and how of local food sourcing."

The Canadian Environmental Law Association, in their model food act, included a proposal for regional food hubs.

In their recent green paper series, the Greenbelt Foundation fund stated, "Lack of access to products from Ontario farms is a fundamental barrier to increase the amount of Ontario food in public institutions." They identified that one of the obstacles to government procurement of local food was that supply needed to be aggregated.

This mirrors what we heard from Michigan about their experience with Buy Michigan First through their correctional facilities. They told us that one of the challenges they faced in sourcing local foods was that they didn't have the staff resources to contact all the different suppliers and visit multiple locations. It needed to be brought together.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo recently announced that New York would be building new food hubs to help bring local goods to market, spur growth and strengthen communities.

In Ontario, we are fortunate to have the Ontario Food Terminal here in Toronto, which does an excellent job of bringing together wholesalers to sell to our restaurants, processors and stores. However, as we look to expand and strengthen our food system, it's clear that more needs to be done to bring together local food, increase market access for farmers, and make it easier for local retailers and restaurants to access fresh Ontario food.

That's why, in our white paper, we are proposing a regional food terminal, likely located in southwestern Ontario, in the London area, or in eastern Ontario, near Ottawa. In both of these areas, local food is being loaded onto trucks and shipped to the food terminal in Toronto, only to be resold, loaded on new trucks and shipped back. As Ottawa local food group Just Food said, "Not only does a local food terminal reduce the transport distances of food (currently, a percentage of the produce from the Ontario region travels to Toronto, to then be bought by an Ottawa-based food supplier and transported back), but it also creates significant employment and volunteer opportunities for the local economy and more effective coordination of the distribution of locally produced food."

Mr. Speaker, creating a new food terminal would create opportunities for food wholesalers that can't get

space at the Ontario Food Terminal. It would reduce our carbon footprint, encourage local food and create jobs. It is a bold idea, but it is something that should be in the food act. The fact that the government chose not to include it is just another example of a missed opportunity.

One of the other issues we heard about in our surveys was the spiralling cost of hydro. Ninety-seven per cent of farmers said they had been impacted by the increasing cost of hydro, and over 60% said that impact had been significant. When asked about the biggest challenges his farm is facing, one farmer in southwestern Ontario said, "Hydro metering, solar and wind are ludicrous until you can tell me how to recoup these extra costs."

A farmer from eastern Ontario said, "Trying to bring the costs of energy down. Fuel has been through the roof lately. Electricity has darn near doubled."

The government's microFIT Program has benefitted a few at the expense of the rest of Ontarians, including the majority of our farmers.

Earlier this week, we heard that Ontarians are going to have to pay \$275 million—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. Point of order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I know that you give great latitude to what a member can speak about when we speak about a particular bill, but this is about the Local Food Act for the province of Ontario. I wonder if you could remind the member to restrict in sort of a general way his comments to the great quality of the local food that's being produced in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would obviously stand up if I felt the member was veering too far. I think actually 99% of it has been involved with food and agriculture. So I can't agree with the member on this one. Go ahead.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just point out to the objector that the problem is that all of this should have been in the food act and it's not. That's the point I'm trying to make.

Earlier this week, we heard that Ontarians are going to have to pay \$275 million—\$85 million more than the government claimed—for the relocation of the Mississauga plant. Again, that will be added on to our hydro bills. For many commodities grown in Ontario, the price is set on the Chicago exchange. If the cost of production increases, our farmers don't have an ability to pass it on. It comes straight out of their pocket, just like the recent Ontario Tire Stewardship fee increase approved by this government. Without consulting with farmers, this government approved eco fees that would increase the cost of a set of tires for a 1900 John Deere to \$729, up from \$61. The new tire fees for a John Deere 9770 combine increased to \$1,644 from \$91. The OFA said, "It's a drastic price"—

Interjections.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General, things were so nice in here a few minutes

ago, and you seem to be really stepping it up a notch. Would you like to cut it back a bit, please? Thank you.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The OFA said, "It's a drastic price increase that will be detrimental to Ontario farm businesses and the rural communities they support. The increase is all the more devastating because it has come as such a surprise. There were no opportunities for the public, or Ontario's largest general farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), to comment on these increases. Ontario farmers were not informed about these changes." That's their quote.

I've heard from hundreds of farmers who are upset about these fees. They've sent emails, they've called and they've signed petitions. But even though the Premier and part-time Minister of Agriculture acknowledged the problem several weeks ago, on April 1, the massive increases went into effect.

Ontario's farmers need a full-time minister who will stand up for them. It shouldn't be the OFA, who weren't even consulted about the fees, negotiating with Ontario Tire Stewardship.

On Friday, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—not the Minister of Agriculture—announced some changes to the fees, but they still represent a massive increase to farmers. As my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga pointed out in his question on Monday, it's still a 1,000% increase, with another 1,000% increase coming down the road.

For tires on a John Deere combine, the new proposed fee will be \$823 compared to our neighbours, Manitoba, where the fee will be \$24, and Quebec, where those tires are exempt and there will be no additional fees.

For a John Deere 9300 tractor, the new proposed fees would be \$729, exactly the same as the increase the government first approved and that went into effect April 1.

Farmers have been speaking out against these increases. Our tire dealerships have been telling the government that it will cost Ontario sales. Our party launched a petition and has raised it repeatedly in this Legislature, but the person who has been missing in action is the Minister of Agriculture. That is why it has been the Ontario Federation of Agriculture negotiating with Ontario Tire Stewardship.

Why is the Minister of Agriculture standing back and letting farmers get hit with this massive increase? Why did her government approve it without looking at the economic impact? The Premier has repeatedly said that she has taken on the role of minister to raise the profile of agriculture and food. It's a typical response from this government: When there is a problem, they hold a photo op.

Premier, publicity isn't the problem. The people of Ontario want to eat Ontario food. The problem is that no one in your government has been willing to stand up for the people who produce our food, and that hasn't changed.

Farmers need someone who will consult with them before implementing policies that will impact them. No matter what ministry the policies fall under, they need

someone who will address the challenges that Ontario agriculture faces.

EnviroNics found that, "Ontario consumers are increasingly interested in reading origin labels on the food they purchase, with a preference for buying locally grown. A vast majority also state that they would buy more locally sourced food if they could find it in the grocery store."

Premier, we don't need photo ops; we need to get more local food into our stores. That means looking at all parts of our food system, from farm fields to processing to distribution and retailing.

Two months ago, when this minister was sworn in—the first time—I expressed my concerns that the Minister of Agriculture had been demoted to a part-time job. Many farmers expressed the same concern. One eastern Ontario farmer said, "Wynne needs to realize that if agriculture is to survive in Ontario, it does indeed need a full-time agriculture minister and one that is definitely in tune with where agriculture is and how important it is to the province."

A professional agrologist wrote, "I know from my experience from working with William Stewart, Jack Riddle, Dave Ramsay, Elmer Buchanan and other agriculture ministers that this responsible position requires full-time representation and long hours of work seven days a week."

Here in Ontario we grow hundreds of commodities. Understanding the issues of our many farmers and food processors, as well as our different regions, is a challenging job. An essential part of the job is having the time to meet with all the different organizations and to go out to talk to the farmers, visit the farms and see firsthand the challenges they are facing.

A month ago, I asked the Minister of Agriculture to go to eastern Ontario and visit farms that had been impacted by the drought, to talk to farmers who were suffering and to fix the flaws with the AgriRecovery program, which ended almost two months before the problem did.

I wrote to the Premier and asked her to extend the deadline, and when I didn't receive a response, I raised it in the Legislature on March 5 to point out that the deadline was getting closer. But it wasn't until March 15, hours before the deadline expired, that the Premier finally announced an extension. That doesn't give farmers stability or ability to plan. Farmers need an agriculture minister who is addressing problems right away, not waiting until hours before the deadline or after the increases have gone into effect.

In our meeting weeks ago, I raised another issue with the Premier, the lack of a proper appeal process for farmers who disagree with AgriStability decisions. Under the current process, farmers can appeal Agricorp decisions to the Ontario AgriStability Review Committee. However, the decisions are non-binding. That means that even if the review committee finds in favour of the farmer, Agricorp can still choose to ignore it and stick with their original finding. The former minister justified it by saying it was a federal requirement; however, a

federal spokesman said in a recent newspaper article that even though the committee's decision is not binding, in most jurisdictions—not in Ontario but in most jurisdictions—the appeal decision was upheld.

In Ontario, this has not been the case. I've heard from multiple farmers who went through the time, effort and expense for an appeal that the committee found that Agricorp had not applied the rules fairly, but Agricorp chose to ignore the ruling. These are farmers who paid the premiums for the program. I raised this issue with the Premier weeks ago. She was already aware of the issue but, to date, we've had no action on the problem.

With direction to Agricorp, it could have been resolved in this Legislature, but it simply hasn't been addressed. It's just one more missed opportunity to do the right thing for Ontario farmers.

Another thing we had hoped to see for our farmers in this bill was a dedicated fund for the Risk Management Program. For many years, the Ontario PC caucus has supported having an insurance program based on cost of production to help farmers manage their risk. In fact, in the two years before the program was introduced, the PC caucus called for a business risk management program in the Legislature 25 times. Tim Hudak repeated our commitment to introduce the program at the Earlton and St. Thomas international plowing matches and in speeches at the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers, the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and Grain Farmers of Ontario.

We understand the need to manage the risk for both our farmers and our government, but the program as it's designed today puts too much risk on our farmers. Each year, both the government and the farmers put the premiums into the program, but if the premiums aren't used, the government can take their remaining premiums back. We don't believe this is fair. We believe that it's not the best way to manage risk. If premiums aren't used, they should stay in the dedicated fund and be available for future years when the payout required is greater than the cap. That will help even out the good years with the bad, it will help manage the risk and it will benefit our farmers. It's another initiative that we propose to put in this food act and that we were hoping we'd see in the bill.

One of the other proposals that we put forward in our white paper was to increase food literacy by putting more food education in the curriculum. It's an area where Ontario can and should do better.

On their blog, FoodShare Toronto recently stated, "Food literacy cultivates an understanding of food from the ground up and equips children and youth with the skills to make healthy choices."

"How children eat when they are young lays the foundation for lifelong healthy eating, but good food education is not common in many schools in Ontario."

"Few students are taught how to grow their own food, cook a healthy meal or compost, or educated on where their food comes from."

A recent study by Farmers Feed Cities found that only 41% of 18- to 34-year-olds claim to be aware of where their food is grown.

I heard from one agriculture advocate who went into a classroom to talk to the students about local food. When he asked kids about their knowledge of agriculture, the most experienced was a child who had once been to a petting zoo.

There are a number of benefits to increasing food literacy, such as giving children the tools they need for a healthy diet, increasing awareness of local food and teaching students about our food system so those with an interest are encouraged to consider a career in agriculture or food processing.

That's why we proposed to put food education in the curriculum and proposed a co-op program to give young people from cities who have an interest in food and agriculture the opportunity to experience farming and encourage them to consider jobs in that sector.

That's also why we, and many organizations, were hoping for a real commitment to food literacy in this bill.

We believe that the best way to encourage people to choose healthy food and local food is through education: teaching them about nutrition and where our food comes from and giving them the skills to make good choices—not only while they're students but throughout their lives.

1700

This government believes that the solution is to ban or restrict certain foods in schools. In fact—and I think this is important, Mr. Speaker—on January 15, 2010, when the Premier was Minister of Education, she released the School Food and Beverage Policy, which restricts what food could be sold in our schools. She banned 500-millilitre containers of chocolate milk from all schools and 500- millilitre containers of white milk from elementary schools. Clearly, we do need food literacy if the Minister of Agriculture doesn't know that milk is good for you.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked a lot today about what isn't in the bill: addressing our challenges with red tape and hydro, improving local food distribution by bringing it together, and increasing food literacy. We also want to talk about some of the problems in the bill, such as the section on government procurement.

As you know, the Local Food Act says, "The minister may, to further the purpose of this act, establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food."

I have two specific concerns with that. First, there's no requirement that the minister actually set targets. Not only does the act not set targets, it doesn't even set a time frame in which the minister would be required to set targets. In fact, the government has indicated they may not set real targets at all. In a radio interview following the introduction of this bill last fall, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs stated that he was hoping that as a result of this act the broader public sector would "ideally set targets for themselves" after they got through reading the act.

In her leadoff speech, the current minister said that there were some concerns that if we are "too prescriptive as a provincial government, we would put in place an undue burden on local communities, on municipalities

and on producers. We don't want to do that." I hope she will clarify that statement and explain whether she's in fact saying that, as minister, she will choose not to set actual targets.

My second concern is with the word "aspire." In our briefing with the ministry, they called the goals "voluntary." In other words, the broader public sector can choose to completely ignore the targets. There are already a number of hospitals, long-term-care homes, schools and municipalities that have taken steps to increase the amount of local food they have purchased and to make more local food available for sale in their facilities. I want to commend them for that. They're already doing it because it's the right thing to do for the health of the people in their facility, for the environment and for our farmers. But there's nothing in this bill that would require our broader public sector to follow their example. These organizations are funded by taxpayers' dollars. The people of Ontario have a right to expect that they will meet certain standards.

The PC caucus believes that the Ontario government should lead by example, by buying Ontario food. Ontario grows great, safe, nutritious food. Our farmers are hard-working and innovative. We believe that if government gets out of their way, they can compete with farmers around the world. Why wouldn't we take real steps to support Ontario's agriculture industry and ensure that our government is a real leader in local food?

In her speech, the Minister of Agriculture said that we could not set real targets for local food because of concerns from municipalities and producers. The reality is that many municipalities are far ahead of the Ontario government in local food. They have taken leadership roles in requiring that a percentage of the food purchased for their facilities be sourced locally. Toronto already requires a percentage of local food in their contracts with their food providers. There are municipalities, like Norfolk county, that have worked to increase the local food in their local hospital and long-term-care homes. In 2008, Markham council adopted a food policy that instructs their cafeteria services for the Markham Civic Centre to purchase a minimum of 10% of its food from certified Local Food Plus farmers and to increase that percentage by 5% every year thereafter. By 2009, the cafeteria service provider had already reached 25%. In November, as part of their official plan review, Sudbury held a workshop to look at their local food system, and one of the results that came forward was a proposal for specific targets.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities have shown they value local food and they want to take steps to support their farmers and work with their processors.

The minister also cited concerns from producers. Just a few weeks ago in a pre-budget submission, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said, "Our food strategy needs a set of an agreed-upon and measurable outcomes to guide the development of all agriculture and food-related policies. This will lead to focused and meaningful

policies aimed at achieving goals for a sustainable food system.”

The Canadian National Food Strategy Framework recommends, “Canadian governments and public institutions lead by example and increase the utilization of Canadian-grown and processed products by at least 2% per year.” It seems everybody is setting goals and targets except our minister.

Targets must be reasonable and they should be incremental, but they must be real, specific and measurable.

Interestingly, last fall, when the government introduced this bill, they said they could not set real targets. Then it was because of trade concerns. We believe that’s simply incorrect. I don’t believe there’s any jurisdiction with more restrictive rules to ensure free trade and non-discrimination than the European Union, and yet there are numerous examples of government policies supporting the purchase of local food, such as those in Italy and the United Kingdom

In the United States, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 allows schools to use geographic preference as a factor in procurement of food for school lunches. This is intended to allow schools to give preference to locally grown or raised products. In fact, governments around the world have created policies to bring local food into the schools, from Nova Scotia here in Canada to Brazil and Japan. In fact, the report *Menu 2020: Ten Good Food Ideas for Ontario*, released by Metcalf Foundation in June 2010 states, “Governments at all levels, particularly in Europe and the United States, are using sustainable food procurement policies to build healthier, more economically viable food and farming systems.”

The Ontario law firm of Sack Goldblatt Mitchell provided an opinion on the trade compliance of local food procurement policies to the BC Government and Service Employees’ Union, which states in part: “In our view, local food procurement policies are entirely consistent with both international and domestic procurement rules. For the most part, these regimes simply do not apply to most local food procurement. Even where domestic procurement rules do apply, buy-local food policies would, if properly crafted, be compliant with those obligations.” They went on to say, “Food procurement policies would ... be exempt under domestic trade regimes because they relate to legitimate objectives including environmental protection, public health promotion and food security.”

Their conclusion was, “For the above-noted reasons, there is simply no plausible basis for impugning the validity of a local food procurement policy under either international or domestic trade rules.”

One of the few changes in this version of the Local Food Act is that the minister will now be required to report on government actions on local food every three years. My concern is that since there is no requirement for sub-targets, that report may very well be meaningless. The minister can stand up every three years and say how much the government loves local food, and we have no way of measuring—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The ministers are having quite a loud conversation over here. I’m having trouble hearing the speaker. If you want to have a little quorum, you might want to go outside with it. Thanks.

Continue.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The minister can stand up every three years and say how much the government loves local food, and we have no way of measuring whether or not things are actually getting better or worse. The minister will stand up and say, “We are supporting Foodland Ontario,” as every government has done since it was established in 1977. They will stand up and talk about how great Ontario food tastes and likely have a photo op, but the people of Ontario will have no way of knowing whether the government is purchasing more or less local food. They will have no way of measuring whether the availability of local food is increasing. For the report to matter, the minister has to be required to set real, measurable goals in the procurement of local food and in actions to improve production, distribution, availability and knowledge of local food, and then the minister has to be required to report on his or her progress towards meeting those goals. Mr. Speaker, this Local Food Act is a disappointment and a missed opportunity.

I just quickly wanted to go over—and I did have a copy of it here. I think the minister opposite was a little concerned that some of my comments may not be addressed directly to the act.

1710

Now, I just want to point out the actual act and the explanatory note that we got with the act. This capsulizes what’s in the whole bill; this is the whole vision of the bill.

“The Local Food Act, 2013 is enacted. Highlights of the act are as follows:

“1. The week beginning on the Monday before Thanksgiving Day in each year is proclaimed as Local Food Week.

“2. The Minister of Agriculture and Food may establish”—may—“goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food. The minister must engage in consultation before setting the goals or targets. The minister may direct a public sector organization to provide information that would assist the minister in establishing goals or targets”—may—“understanding steps that are being taken or have been taken to meet a goal or target, or assessing progress that is being made or has been made toward meeting a goal or target.

“3. The minister must prepare a report about local food activities at least once every three years”—end of explanation of the whole bill in its entirety. So it really points out—my whole presentation is more about what isn’t in the bill, because there is absolutely nothing in the bill.

This Local Food Act is a disappointment and a missed opportunity. It is disappointing that after all her

commitment to introduce a strengthened food act, the Premier has made no substantial changes to the bill and taken no action to address the many issues facing our agriculture industry and the food processors. She has taken no action that would help get local food from our farm fields into stores and restaurants. She has taken no action to put real targets in place and commit this government to a leadership role in purchasing local foods.

We believe Ontario needs a real food act, one that addresses the many challenges our farmers are facing, such as red tape, spiralling hydro costs and a need for a dedicated fund for business risk management. We need a real food act that addresses the challenges with our food system, from the need to bring together supply through a regional food terminal, to red tape facing our processors, the lack of small abattoirs and the need for food literacy to be part of our curriculum.

While we are disappointed in the act that has been introduced, we are committed to work with stakeholder groups, processors and farmers to put forward amendments that will address some of these issues, to try and strengthen Ontario's agriculture industry and our food system. We believe in the importance of local food and our farmers, and we believe that they deserve a real food act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise after the member from Oxford, and I will also refer to his nephew the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who did his leadoff the other day and said it best: This isn't a bill; this is a press release. That's what this is. It's a press release that didn't even get the press release correct, because, in fact, Local Food Week, as the member from Oxford pointed out, takes away Agriculture Week; it's the same week. They couldn't even get the dates right. Very, very said, and this in a place—and I have to point this out, Mr. Speaker; this is for local food awareness—that serves Seattle's Best Coffee downstairs in the cafeteria. Now, I know we don't produce coffee, but come on—Seattle's Best in the Legislature, and they have the audacity to proclaim Local Food Week. I love it.

I want to give a shout-out, however, to people who are getting it right, and that's in my community, people like the West End Food Co-op, who actually do something. They bring in local farmers. They set up every week when the weather is good. And the rest of the week, we have a store where we sell the produce, and it's done by the community for the community. The food we don't sell goes to the food bank. It's amazing.

My father was one of the co-signatories on the very first food co-op in Toronto, and that was the Karma Food Co-op, in the 1970s. So from the 1970s, we've been talking about local food and getting it right in downtown Toronto. And, of course, since there was ground, farmers have been getting it right.

The question is, why can't this government get it right? Why can't they get procurement right? This is not

brain surgery. Simply put your money where your mouth is and buy local in the ministries, in the government. This is so simple.

So, again, a press release, not a bill.

Great job, Uncle Ernie. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the member from Oxford as well as the member from Parkdale-High Park.

I stand here, Mr. Speaker—I was a mayor during the Harris years, and I can recall the great defenders of agriculture cutting 42 OMAFRA offices across the province. They didn't have a Buy Local strategy. They cut \$164 million out of the agriculture budget during their years.

I want to reference an article by the honourable member to the Lindsay Post, and I'll use two of his quotes: "While it's important to recognize local food we don't believe taking away Ontario Agriculture Week is the solution." Then he asks people to go to a specific website and send a message to Premier Wynne, asking her not to replace Ontario Agriculture Week. We're not replacing Ontario Agriculture Week. It's still there. They go hand in hand—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Are we finished?

Interjection: Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Good.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can't understand why you can't have both in the same week. They go hand in hand; they complement each other. I respect our farmers. It's like telling a kid, "You were born on Christmas; we're going to make your birthday the 26th." It makes absolutely no sense at all.

The Premier has responded; the Minister of Agriculture and Food has responded to the member from Oxford's letter to the Lindsay Post. This is a quote from the minister: "When we considered potential dates for a Local Food Week, we acknowledged the importance of celebrating locally harvested food when these foods are at peak availability and accessibility—in the fall, the same time as Agriculture Week. Local Food Week enhances the profile for both farmers and food."

Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is an absolute delight to stand up and give my colleague a standing O, because he hits it right on the head. This member gets it, in the sense that he has worked alongside farmers to get policy right.

I could just go on and on about everything he was absolutely perfectly correct on, but I would just invite people to check out the Hansard. Revisit this member's, Ernie Hardeman's, our agriculture critic, remarks because, again, he very astutely hit one issue after another after another that underlines and underscores the fact that this Local Food Act, Bill 36, just isn't hitting the mark.

I'd be remiss if I didn't specifically touch on comments that our agriculture critic shared with regard to

energy rates. He has consulted with farmers across this province, and he has heard time and time again that margins are very small. You know what? People pass all price increases along, all along the value chain line, and it stops at the farmer. But guess what? The farmer doesn't have anyone else to pass his increased production costs, like energy costs, along to. Farmers are seeing increases of upwards of \$1,000 on their monthly energy charges because of global adjustment.

It's sad to say that the Auditor General yesterday pointed out that their hard-earned dollars, their very small margins, those dollars that are hard to squeak out in some cases, are going to offset the cost of the cancelled gas plants. It just doesn't make any sense whatsoever when we should be embracing local production.

I can tell you, Speaker, that our farmers in Ontario are astute businessmen. They cannot be placated by quaint lines like "farm gate to the plate" because—guess what?—it starts in the back 50. It starts in the barn. We need programs to make our farmers the best they can be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It is truly an honour to be able to follow the member from Oxford in a debate about agriculture.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Aw, come on. Is your mom making you say that?

Mr. John Vanthof: He's my uncle, and I respect him. I don't agree with him a lot of times, but I respect him. But today he made a lot of good points, because I think on this side of the House, we just don't talk about agriculture; the ag critics on this side of the House—we know agriculture because we live it. I guess the Liberals just can't understand what's so significant about celebrating agriculture. We're going to leave it at that. That isn't the most important thing that the member for Oxford brought today.

1720

The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell didn't use in his response. They keep using—they have no goals or objectives in this act. I've heard a couple times, "Oh, that's because we're so worried about trade agreements." Folks here and folks at home: That's a total red herring. The problem with that is, we have got the Premier, who is Minister of Agriculture and Food, and she should know those trade agreements inside and out, because there is nothing more important to both supply management and non-supply management than understanding those trade agreements. To stand on that side of the House saying, "Oh, but it could be the trade agreements," and just using it for an excuse because they've written a bad bill—own up to it and say, "Okay."

You know what? We're offering—and the PCs also—to give good suggestions on how to make this a real bill, but please, don't use words that are very important to farmers across this province and across the country flippantly, like, "Oh, it might harm trade agreements." Know your stuff.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford has two minutes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Parkdale–High Park, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Huron–Bruce, and Timiskaming–Cochrane, particularly, for their kind words about the presentation.

I did want to just quickly cover the issue that the parliamentary assistant talked about: the Agriculture Week, and that somehow they have now come to the conclusion that it's going to be the same week—they're going to put them together. When we had the briefing from the ministry, in fact, the ministry staff said they hadn't given it any thought that it was on the same day, and if we could suggest another day, maybe we could just move it. That's what was told to us. Now, all of a sudden he's saying, "No, no, no. This was all our plan." They're making it up as they go along, and it seems to me that he would have been a lot better off coming up with some constructive suggestions.

The other thing, I think, that's really important—and I commend my nephew John for bringing it up—is the issue of being trade-compliant. I think the information that we were able to gather from England and the European common market and what they're doing in the United States and what they're doing in other jurisdictions—they are covered by trade agreements that are much more stringent than ours, because we already have exemptions in ours. But there is absolutely nothing that would indicate that setting acceptable targets and achievable targets would in any way even be considered as not being trade-compliant, and for the government to use that as an argument, I think, totally mitigates their credibility on understanding the file altogether. I think that explains why this is a fluff bill, that there's nothing in there that the minister is going to do; it's going to be a photo op to introduce the bill, and then we will not hear from it again, because she will not likely ever get to set any targets at all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General on a point of order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Would it be appropriate to move a motion that it's 6:23 Standard Time at this point in time?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It probably wouldn't, and I'm sure that the Clerks' table is quite capable of taking care of the timekeeping, but thanks for your additional help.

Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to the importance of local food and to the Local Food Act, G36. I just want to thank, actually, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his comments yesterday; I had a good opportunity to learn from the lived experience of a farmer in this Legislature. By extension and by relation, I want to thank the member from Oxford for his comments as well.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I cannot hear a word that the member is saying, not a word. I think it

would be appropriate if the Speaker can hear, at least, what is transpiring, in case, for some reason, she says something that you may not like. But I can't hear her, so I would suggest that if you want to talk loud, take it outside.

Continue.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much. I'm not going to start from the beginning. I was so wise in my opening comments; I'm sorry you missed them.

But I do want to say I'm going to focus my comments this afternoon on the stakeholders that haven't been consulted fully and the stakeholders who actually haven't been listened to—thus, the act as it is before us today is not fully informed.

I also just wanted to do a special shout-out to my in-laws, Walter and Shirley Fife. They're first generation off the farm. The Fifes came to Ontario many years ago, and they brought with them Red Fife wheat, which has made a resurgence across the province and, indeed, across the country. It makes some great bread, hearty bread. It actually allowed Saskatchewan to be prosperous in those early years. I might also say it makes some good beer as well, Red Fife beer. I'm sure they're going to be very impressed with the beer comment.

The education that I mentioned earlier, from the members from Timiskaming—Cochrane and Oxford—it is about education, local food. Knowledge actually is needed on this portfolio. I do think that there has been—as was said yesterday, people have rediscovered their connection to local food and the people who grow it. I think that's been a long time coming, and I think it should actually drive the debate and discussion as it relates to this act.

I did want to say why this act is so important, not only for the people of the province, but also for people of Waterloo region. Before I go into the weaknesses and the criticism of the bill, I do want to frame this conversation around why it is so important. Certainly, for Waterloo region, it may be of interest to some of the members in this House to learn that an economic impact study in Waterloo region found that every job in the agriculture sector supports four additional jobs in the local economy, and that each dollar of sales in the agricultural sector generates an extra \$2.40 in sales of the local economy. This is a job creator. There's an economic impact to local food that I think actually has been missed. The potential has not been realized in the province.

In addition, though, there's the other side of the conversation around the actual health benefits of local food and what it means for a community. In Waterloo region, a 2005 study noted that current dietary habits of Waterloo region residents do not meet the dietary recommendations of Canada's Food Guide. Over half—58%—of residents consume fewer than the daily recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables. Evidence suggests that people are more likely to meet dietary recommendations when they have ready access to grocery stores with healthy, affordable food as opposed to convenience stores that are mostly packaged and processed food.

There are so many important reasons to get this Local Food Act right. I think that those who have spoken already before me have clearly already outlined the weaknesses in a broad and actually detailed way. But I think we need to remember that this is really a plan to create a plan. I guess the positive side of that is that it opens the door to a conversation about how important local food is.

There clearly are weaknesses in the way that the act has been constructed. The bill itself does not tackle the issue of the need for local food and the attention that local food deserves. It fails to illustrate or even to promote how much we as Ontarians value the abundance of local food that we have access to in this province. Actually, there's evidence to suggest that we're willing to pay extra for it because we understand the connection that we, as consumers, have to the agriculture industry.

I wanted to put a little focus right now on what municipalities have been able to do and also what local food activists have been able to do. In Waterloo region, we have a Waterloo region food charter that the municipality has endorsed. It's quite comprehensive. The Waterloo region food charter's vision, just for the record—which would be a good start to inform this act—was recently endorsed by the region of Waterloo's social planning committee. It states that “a healthy, just, and sustainable food system is one in which all residents have access to, and can afford to buy, safe, nutritious, and culturally acceptable food that has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way, and that supports our rural communities. Such a food system promotes social justice, population health, and profitable farms, reflects and sustains local culture, and supports ecological viability.”

Now this is a vision for a local food act, because the Local Food Act should be more comprehensive. It should be more expansive in its goals. We need to be more ambitious for the local food movement. The goals of the local food initiative should be to connect people to the local food system, including students and seniors. I'm going to talk a little bit about the importance of education and the importance of local food to positively impact the education system, but I'm also going to talk a little bit about seniors and, as seniors age, the importance of solid nutrition.

1730

I was sitting on the finance committee and was quite honestly shocked to learn, when the not-for-profit sector came in, that seniors in our long-term-care facilities have a \$7-a-day allowance for food—\$7. It's quite incredible. How can you take care of a senior in a responsible way and ensure that they have the proper nutrition for \$7 a day?

So we need to stay focused on connecting people to the local food system, we need to support the economic development around local food, we need to support access to healthy food and we need to support ecological health. As I mentioned, education is a key component of that.

The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable is one of the groups that wrote an open letter to the Premier. Because it's open, I wanted to address a couple of the points they made. This is a letter sent to the Premier to encourage her to incorporate some of their expansive research and ideas into the act and, to a large degree, from what I can tell, most of their recommendations were not included or accepted. But you know what? All hope is not lost, because we've indicated that we're willing to work on this act and to support it, and at second reading, we will be pursuing some of the recommendations from those informed stakeholders from the local communities that, for some reason, were left out of the consultation process.

The letter dated March 20, less than a month ago, encourages the Premier to "reintroduce the Ontario Local Food Act," but also asks the Premier to "broaden the act's scope in order to make it a meaningful and comprehensive policy that is able to address a wide range of food issues in Ontario."

I did find it interesting, in the member from Oxford's one-hour comments, that the Premier did promise to strengthen the Local Food Act during the Liberal leadership race, and yet we just got essentially the same act back after she became the leader of the Liberal Party. So something wrong has happened here. It's a missed opportunity. But why bring forward something that you know isn't good enough?

So, just to go back to the open letter to the Premier, the stakeholders who had a vested interest and who have been pursuing this issue for many years, go on to say, "It is our desire to build a food system that makes healthy, sustainable food accessible to all members of our community." They have identified six food system priorities to develop, and one of the key priorities is to develop a local food infrastructure. This is a key piece that's missing, and it focuses on "reorienting the food system to focus on locally grown and processed foods" which "would cut down on the carbon footprint associated with the food we eat while also supporting our local economies."

It also involves "leveraging the purchasing power of public institutions to support Ontario's agriculture," which "would create new markets for local food, thereby helping to support and scale up local food growers and processors."

Now, this is what we've heard from farmers for a number of years. They have products that are, as we've all said, the best in the world—the best produce, the best vegetables. This is something that already should be a key part of the act.

The open letter goes on to say, "We also believe that a strong and meaningful Local Food Act would need to be comprehensive, and we encourage you to consider including policies that take into account the connections between the environment, the economy and health."

They've also used research from Sustain Ontario, and that round table endorsed a letter to the Ontario government last July.

The Legislature was prorogued. A lot of good work, private members' bills included, was interrupted. So we're back at the table again, trying to get this right. I know that there is frustration out there in the broader community that we have to go through this process again, but we're determined, as I said, to get it right.

That letter from July "advocated that an Ontario Local Food Act should specifically address a number of important issues related to food, including:

"—ensuring that all Ontarians have access to, and the means to obtain, safe, healthy, local and culturally acceptable food;

"—providing Ontarians with the information, knowledge, skills, resources and relationships to support healthy eating and healthy choices where they live, work, learn and play;

"—protecting and promoting a diverse and sustainable food production system that contributes to an equitable and sustainable economy."

Essentially, what we're talking about here is a holistic Local Food Act that doesn't just stay focused on some minor targets. We need to be more ambitious on this. The fact that for some reason this act says that this will help us "aspire" to be better—legislation doesn't aspire us to be better. Listening to people who have the informed, lived experience of how to make the local food industry or agri-food more accessible and more connected to the people and more healthy: This is where we should be focusing our attention.

Some of the key points from Sustain Ontario worth noting:

"Food and food systems are central to the well-being of Ontarians and are integrally linked to Ontario's population, economic, social and environmental health. Through an Ontario Local Food Act, food and food systems could:

"—increase benefits to local and regional economies, communities and farmers"—and I just gave some evidence of that;

"—contribute to population health through the alleviation of hunger, chronic disease and obesity;

"—create a healthy food future by developing healthy food habits and knowledge in Ontario's children and youth;

"—operate within a framework which ensures the protection and conservation of land, soil and water upon which we all depend."

You have an act that the government has put forward, and yet even in Waterloo region earlier in the year, a recent OMB decision actually sets the protection of land, soil and water at risk. So you have contravening pieces of legislation and forces here at play which a Local Food Act, if it was truly comprehensive, would actually prevent from happening.

To that point, though: Sustain Ontario actually encourages the government to create an interministerial working group to address these issues in a Local Food Act. We've talked about interministerial working groups for many years now, and groups from the community have advo-

cated for them—especially on issues like mental health, physical health, the economy—and for some reason we just can't get it right. This would be a great way to pilot various ministries actually working together to make a healthier Ontario, a more productive Ontario and a more prosperous Ontario. These are the stakeholders that have put forward their ideas.

I'm very proud of the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable. Their theme is, Connecting Our Community to the Work of Building a Healthy Food System. They do a lot of great work. As a politician, I try to sit at their table on a regular basis and listen to some of their challenges and listen to some of their advice, because that's essentially what I see as our responsibility.

The NDP actually had put forward a buy-Ontario commitment which would make it the law that Ontario's money is spent here in Ontario and which would encourage food processors to purchase local foods. And there's good reason to do this. In 2004, Ontario exported approximately \$2.5 million worth of asparagus, for instance, and it imported \$1.7 million worth of asparagus. In 2004, Ontario exported \$93 million worth of tomatoes and imported \$31 million worth of tomatoes. Those who are listening, if anybody is listening, would quite honestly find that to be nonsensical on several levels. The study concluded that imported produce is widely available in Waterloo region, for instance, during the peak of a product's growing season locally.

Obvious environmental ramifications of redundant trade have been seen in this province for a number of years. One example is that we have much higher greenhouse gas emissions than necessary. This is one of the side effects of not having a comprehensive local food act, that we're missing the mark on several levels from an environmental perspective.

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I can give you some examples from the region of Waterloo's public health study Food Miles—that's a study; it's called Food Miles—the average food item studied travelled 4,497 kilometres to the Waterloo region and produced and generated 1.3 kilograms of greenhouse gas emissions for every one kilogram of food transported. All food items studied were available locally. There's a real disconnect between the way we are trying to move local food into the centre when we actually don't have the policies in place and the supports in place to support farmers, for instance, and also to grow that economy.

The same item, actually, on that example, if it was purchased locally only travels 30 kilometres and it contributes 0.008 kilograms of greenhouse gas emissions. There's no comparison there, really.

I did want to focus a little bit on education, because as the former president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, I wanted to let you know that there is a huge movement in education to try to connect schools and children to their environment. It's really disconcerting, actually, to see how students in our system have no connection to where their food comes from. Even when you go through the supermarket, if there isn't

a concerted effort to educate children where food comes from—what really is local, what really is organic, what really is genetically modified—if we are not teaching food literacy, the piece about what really is good for you and how to read a label—these are so important. I just wanted to say we can't do this alone. I think that we need the private sector to come on board as well, and farmers. Their voices need to be part of a true, informed stakeholder.

We have lots of leaders. In Waterloo region we have Herrle's, a local farm. It's 225 acres. They sell their own produce or they source only Ontario produce. It's a very simple model. The loyalty to this place is astounding, and for good reason: They have a good product. We know that we're supporting a local family; people like that. Also, they have a true commitment to education. Since 1992, they've had school trips, and so they've invited students into their farm. They've connected the dots with food, with nutrition, with the economy, but they're doing it in a very sustainable and local way, which quite honestly needs to be commended.

I think that restaurants and businesses now understand that consumers want this. Even our local deli, our fine foods, Vincenzo's, one of my favourite places on the earth, has organic local food. I shop there to get that.

This Local Food Act needs a lot of work. We need to make it better. There's some urgency to this conversation as well. I look forward to debating it further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président. Ça me fait plaisir de me lever en Chambre aujourd'hui pour parler de ce projet de loi.

J'aime parler de ce projet de loi parce que dans ma circonscription j'ai deux marchés où les marchands, les cultivateurs, peuvent venir vendre leurs fruits et légumes.

It's a pleasure for me to stand up today and speak about the proposed local food bill. If passed, this bill will support, promote and celebrate the good things that are grown and made in Ontario. We want residents of Ontario to be able to eat local food at home, in restaurants, at work, in school, wherever they are.

In restaurants: I know in my community there are quite a few restaurants now that are making a lot of publicity about the fact that they serve local food, and it's very, very popular. They have seized this market and now they are out advertising it, and it's very, very popular.

I know that I have here une petite page, Sophia, and Sophia knows about the farmers' market in Ottawa. In my riding we have two farmers' markets that are very, very popular. We know that when we go there, we buy good food. We want to have local food on our table. We want to encourage our farmers, and we want to celebrate their success.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege to again comment on the comments from the member from Kitchener—

Waterloo. I'm glad to see that someone from an urban riding is able to speak on this bill.

I'm from a rural riding, the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex. But unless I heard the member from Kitchener-Waterloo incorrectly, produce and vegetables are in fact the same thing, but that's just for the record.

I look at this particular bill, and having read it through several times, I was looking for what I would call meat and potatoes. There is no meat and there definitely are no potatoes, just a lot of starch somewhere along there. Of course, I fail to see how important this particular bill is. We do know that the self-proclaimed Minister of Agriculture, self-appointed Minister of Agriculture, is perhaps doing her best, but this particular bill, in my opinion, Speaker, is in fact just a bunch of words.

We want to be able to perhaps take a look at this bill in greater depth, and assuming that it will in fact pass second reading and get into committee, we want to make it more substantial so that it really does what it's intended to do or at least what we feel it should be intended to do, and that is to address the needs specifically of the farming community throughout Ontario—rural Ontario, I might add.

Having said that, I think that much has been said about this particular bill at this point in time. I look forward to, at a later point in time, addressing this particular bill in greater depth and detail so that we as a PC Party, in conjunction with perhaps the other members of this astute Legislature, can in fact make this bill more substantial.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It is a pleasure to rise in support of a lot of the comments that came from my seat-mate. She really touched on some very important issues throughout her discussion.

I just wanted to touch on the purpose of this bill, and then I'll go into some of the other concerns I have with the bill. It says in the purpose—and the purpose is good. It says, "The purposes of this act are as follows:

"To foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario.

"To increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food.

"To encourage the development of new markets for local food."

Who's going to argue with that? However, this is my concern: If you look at "Goals and targets" under 4(1)—"The minister may, to further the purposes of this act, establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food." That's my first concern.

Under "Consultation," it goes on to say that "in the minister's opinion, have an interest in the goal or target."

Then you go into "Scope

"(3) A goal or target may be general or particular in its application and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, may be established in respect of..."

Then we go into "Information to be provided to minister

"(5) The minister may direct a public sector...."

Then we go into "Public sector organization to provide information

"(2) If the minister directs...." And then it goes "specified by the minister."

Then it goes into the final section, which is under "Regulations

"7. The minister may make regulations...."

There are a lot of may's, ifs, could's and should have's, but there's really not the wording to really look at developing regional economic opportunities that are so desperately needed for a lot of these communities and a lot of the farmers in this bill.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to rise today and to speak about the farming industry, probably our biggest employer in the province of Ontario. I worked with farmers for about 30 years as a drainage consultant, and I always found that the farmers that survived the 1960s and 1970s were always excellent farmers, but they were also excellent businessmen. It's a tough business, but we have excellent farmers out there, and they do a great job.

One of the things that we've talked about is healthy kids. I hope, if we bring forward something for healthy kids, that we tie the foods in the schools—that we try to get the local products out there.

Minister McMeekin—he was agricultural minister last summer, I think it was—was down in the market in the member for Ottawa-Vanier's riding, and we had about 30 local food producers there. It was all in trying to get better ways to get their food out. It's so much better, the local food. I mean, the tomatoes—all you can say about the ones that we get imported into here is that they're red. They taste the same as radishes; they're red. So we have to encourage our local products a lot more. We have to do that. It's not only much better food for our kids and for ourselves, but it's encouraging a big industry.

The market in Ottawa is apparently in some difficulties, according to a report in the Sun the other day, so we have to make sure we get in there, use that produce, encourage those farmers and keep them there. They're not going to stay there unless they can make a dollar.

I am very much in support of this bill. It's going to help us make sure that Ontario produce gets a bigger percentage of the market in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener-Waterloo has two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you for the feedback on the comments. I think we're all very clear that there's a lot of work that needs to be done. I'm not sure what's going to be happening from the PCs; we hear a lot of "No, no, no" from this side of the House.

What you've heard today from us, I think, though, is that we've identified the issues that need to be fixed, we've made a commitment to support it, but we've also said that we have some tangible, specific issues that we need to be addressed for it to go any further. I hope you've heard very clearly that stakeholders were not

listened to prior to the bringing-forward of this legislation, and there is so much potential that can happen around the Local Food Act.

Certainly at finance committee, we heard from several delegations. One even recommended—and you'll like this, the member from Welland—that local farmers' markets could have special permits to distribute Ontario wine for fixed periods of time. You'd get a lot more people out to the farmers' market, I think, and also you'd be supporting both the local farmers' market and the winery industry.

I think we have to be really clear, though, that this needs to be stronger. It needs to be better. The number of farmers in the province of Ontario is falling. We do not have a vision for the agricultural industry, for five years or for 25 years, and if we don't get working on that right now, we're going to lose more and more land and we're going to lose more and more people who actually want to become farmers. Education is the key—political leadership from this House is also a key factor—and I'm looking forward to making this act work for the people of the province of Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

TAXATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on April 8 by the Minister of the Environment. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for five minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: Given the Liberals' propensity to introduce new taxes, I think it's important to remind viewers at home about the Liberals' eco tax record. Plus, I know the parliamentary assistant had difficulty understanding the facts I laid out last night, and I don't think I saw him jotting down too many notes, so I'd like to provide a bit of a refresher on the Liberal history of eco taxation, so he can hopefully knock some sense into his environment minister.

As we all know, the Liberals created eco taxes in 2008 as part of the Liberal taxation binge, which almost included an onerous, job-killing carbon tax. The godfather of eco taxes, who is none other than Dalton McGuinty, introduced Ontario's first-ever eco tax scheme in 2008. This move toward eco taxation expanded rapidly under the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals.

In just two years, the Liberal government introduced three eco tax regulations, set up three waste diversion programs and created two new recycling monopolies, or what the parliamentary assistant likes to call "industry-run recycling cartels."

First, there's regulation 542/06, which the Liberals established to create their Municipal Hazardous or Special Waste program. Not only did this Liberal-created regulation begin the use of eco taxation in the province, but it led to the Liberals' eco tax fiasco in July 2010—which I know this member is quite familiar with, in front of me—when eco taxes were imposed on thousands of household products, including everything from detergent to shampoo to pharmaceuticals.

Instead of protecting consumers, the Liberal minister responsible for consumer protection was MIA, while the former environment minister defended eco taxes. In fact, the former minister, along with the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, encouraged companies to begin displaying the eco tax amount on price tags as a way to continue its multi-million dollar eco tax scheme.

Just think that today Stewardship Ontario now collects more than \$51 million a year in eco taxes to run the Liberals' Orange Drop program for household hazardous materials.

Then there's regulation 393/04, which established the Liberals' Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Program. Using this regulation, the Liberals not only introduced eco taxes on everything from iPods to TVs to computers; they also set up a new, unaccountable recycling monopoly, or again what the member opposite would refer to as a cartel. Do you know how much eco tax revenue this organization now collects? It's \$88 million a year.

Then there's the tire eco tax program, which the Liberal government created for no other reason than it wanted to help their buddies set up another recycling monopoly.

Regulation 84/03 gives Ontario Tire Stewardship the power to impose massive eco taxes on all sorts of tires. If that wasn't bad enough, earlier this year the environment minister developed a new eco tax formula under regulation 45/13 which sent eco taxes up by as much as 2,200% on farm tires.

In response to farmer outrage, the environment minister went back to work, tinkering with the eco tax funding formula. What was the best he could come up with? Break the exorbitant eco tax increases in half—half for this year, half for next year.

When I asked the environment minister about these massive eco tax increases in question period on Monday, he said the eco tax funding formula is "beneficial" and "reasonable."

Let me assure the government members present tonight: Ontario's hard-working farmers wholeheartedly disagree. The Liberal tire tax formula is detrimental and unreasonable.

I think comments like this just show how really out of touch the Liberal government is from reality. Rather than take responsibility for the eco tax mess they created, the Liberals continue to make up silly stories, hoping the press will just buy whatever they feed them.

So let's just recap how absurd the environment minister has been acting over the last few weeks. After getting

caught for forcing onerous new eco taxes on Ontarians, the environment minister first played dumb. He said he did not know why there were eco taxes, even though he sent a signed letter to Ontario Electronic Stewardship earlier this year, giving them the authority to jack up the eco tax on big-screen TVs by 40%.

He then pretended to be suffering from a sudden case of selective amnesia when questioned about farm tire eco taxes, even though he created the tire eco tax formula earlier this year. He then promised to make companies bury eco taxes in the price of their products at the very same time that the Premier was out telling the media that consumers and businesses needed to understand that eco taxes are a necessary cost of dealing with waste.

Instead of being bold and correcting his leader, which would have taken courage, the environment minister backtracked on eco taxes and even told the Canadian Press he now doesn't even know if he can get rid of them.

The environment minister needs to stop speaking out of both sides of his mouth and actually for once start telling Ontarians the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa—Orléans and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to continue our engaging dialogue from last evening.

I would like to begin by offering my deepest sympathies to the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. I do believe his intentions are sincere and he would truly like to do what is best in this instance and fix this mess of a Tory legacy. It's only common sense. Unfortunately, I believe his associates have placed him in a very difficult situation.

First, the deficiencies in waste diversion were the result of flaws in the Waste Diversion Act, a Tory law. That act calls for the formation of recycling cartels which suppress innovation, competitive energies and the free market. Second, his own leader was asleep at the switch when the Waste Diversion Act was approved by the Tory cabinet. It was his job then to protect consumers, but instead he gave them the eco fees.

It is really one of the toughest jobs in the Legislature to be PC critic for the environment: Rather than having the opportunity to engage in constructive, solution-based dialogue, he is forced to deliver hollow vitriol.

I believe that my colleague, if given the opportunity, would acknowledge that yes, indeed, his party's Waste Diversion Act has stifled diversion in our province by facilitating an environment where recycling cartels are able to shift the onus and responsibility away from individual producers. He might agree that recycling a product at the end of its useful life is simply a cost of doing business. But of course, that is not the mentality of his party. We still have the federal leader of that party who believes you can throw the carbon into the atmos-

phere forever or, as we have here, have no disposal of products.

He might agree that recycling a product at the end of its useful life is simply a cost of doing business. It makes sense. If you produce something that's going to cause environmental damage, you pay for the cost to look after the noxious substances. It's no different than paying an employee's wages, transporting goods or training an employee. He might even agree with the approach we intend to introduce before the Legislature, one that engages the innovative creativity of individual private sector producers.

February marked the one-year anniversary of the announcement of our new action plan on waste, one that would put us back on track and refocus attention on our major waste management goal, which is diversion. Since we announced our new waste plan, we have made progress on a number of fronts. We have implemented a regulation making industry responsible for ensuring that consumers are able to return their waste pharmaceuticals and sharps to retailers. As a result, Ontarians are being provided with access to convenient, free collection sites where they can safely dispose of waste pharmaceuticals and sharps. That makes sense.

We have approved a new compost framework to divert more organic waste from landfills and help municipalities safely manage sewage sludge, as well as open the door to further investment in green technologies.

We established a program, managed by the Recycling Council of Ontario, to ensure proper management of fire extinguishers, rechargeable batteries, fluorescent light bulbs and tubes and mercury-containing devices, as well as pharmaceuticals or sharps dropped off at municipal depots. This ensures municipalities are not burdened with the additional costs related to managing these wastes.

The next step will be to move these products fully to an extended producer responsibility model. That makes sense. Under this approach, the job of government will be to set clear environmental requirements, to ensure end-of-life products are recovered, reused and recycled, generating new investment, new products and new jobs instead of generating pollution.

Speaker, I believe the direct result of this is that a true void has emerged in this debate. We have not been given the opportunity to hear what I can only assume to be the truly inspired and impassioned ideas on the future of waste diversion in this province that the member from Kitchener—Conestoga possesses. I encourage my colleague to share his ideas. I invite him, should he wish, to cross the aisle and engage us on this and many other important reforms.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1804.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 18 April 2013

Jeudi 18 avril 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 18 April 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 18 avril 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good morning, Speaker, and good morning to everyone here in the House on this beautiful spring day. It is the government's pleasure to call government order G36, the Local Food Act.

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 17, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 /
Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I just wanted to say that our prayers are with people in West, Texas, as reports continue to come in with respect to casualties concerning a fertilizer plant explosion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order to bring our attention to this issue. I suspect we'll be dealing with this a little bit later on.

Further debate?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to stand in my place and speak on the Local Food Act. I think it was Vincent Van Gogh who once said that great things are not done by impulse but by a series of small things brought together. I think that's true.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, all things work together for good, if one wanted to get theological about it, I suppose. You need to not be so quick—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Durham, come to order.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —and try to do something that you may not have any idea what you're doing and fail to take the time to do the things you ought to have done.

I think the Local Food Act is a good example of taking the time to get things right. I'm someone who might be called the optimistic gardener. I believe that things that

go down eventually have to grow if you pray enough and care enough: What goes down must come up.

Our farmers, who work so very, very hard facing all the challenges that nature and others can present, use all their skill and hard work and dedication to provide the best-tasting, most nutritious and safest food in the world, and they deserve our praise and our thanks. Farmers do indeed feed cities. But you know what? They also need cities and the consumers who consume the food that's produced.

I don't know if every member of this House would know it or not—talk about small things coming together and making a bigger package—but about 64% of all the produce that is produced in this wonderful province of ours is sold to food processors who then take that bounty and shape it so that the consumers the farmers grow food to feed can, in fact, eat that best-tasting and most nutritious food.

Much of that food, as you would realize, Mr. Speaker, would be exported. We're the envy of the world—the food basket of the world, in many respects. There are nations all around the world that would trade places with us in a wink. In fact, I often say to people when I'm out speaking, "Would you change the challenges and opportunities of Ontario, Canada, for the challenges and opportunities of anywhere else in the world?" Invariably, the answer comes back, "No, I wouldn't," and no wonder; we are so incredibly blessed here.

Those who labour in the field and produce our food are so integral a part of why we have such a good quality of life that we have. As I say, it's their skill, hard work and dedication that make that so. In fact, the agri-food industry, as some people won't know—or may know—is an industry that's the single largest contributor to the Ontario economy.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I know everybody wants to be paying good attention to this, because it's so important.

Some \$35 billion is contributed annually to the gross domestic product, and the agri-food industry directly employs some 710,000 people. These are folk who keep food on our shelves and stock our food markets and make us able to enjoy the standard of living that we have.

Foodland Ontario—you may not know this, either—is the second most recognized brand in Ontario. You know, Mr. Speaker and everybody, it's a catchy tune: "Good things grow in Ontario." We should do it all together. That should be a part of our—maybe we can even incorporate that as an ending to prayer time. "Good things grow—

Mr. John Vanthof: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I seek unanimous consent that we not allow the Minister of Community and Social Services to ever sing again in this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

Minister.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We had a great time up in the member's riding singing that song with his agricultural leaders. By the way, I really enjoyed that trip. I really enjoyed that trip. You've got some great folk up there who taught me a lot about the north and you, sir, about some of the potential—agricultural potential—and how different the agricultural and agri-food system is in the north. I'll be forever indebted to the honourable member opposite for the invitation and the good time we had there.

Mr. Speaker, we're interested in making every week and every day food day in Ontario. There were some who were speaking the other day about the importance of agricultural literacy—food literacy. We couldn't agree more with that. In fact, that's a big part of our hope in this bill that we will be able to work together to ascertain the best way to move forward in terms of sharing the wonder that is the agri-food industry.

I've become convinced in my 23-odd—and some not-so-odd—years in public service that people would much rather arrive together than be driven anywhere. Folk who think that agricultural policy or any kind of act relating to affirming the agricultural sector can be written at somebody's desk or back office at Queen's Park are naive in the extreme. We have so much to learn from our agri-food sector folk, and anyone who is prepared to take the time to do that can learn enough to work in ways together that can make a real difference in Ontario.

0910

I think it was Aristotle who once said, "If you want to know if the shoe fits, ask the person who wears it, not the person who made it." I was very pleased, during my all-too-brief time as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, to have a chance to tour Ontario and to look at some of the challenges and to work with folk. I stress "with folk" because farmers and food processors and the entire ag food industry have been forced in a number of challenges, and they know what they're doing. In addition to that, my experience is that farmers, producers, have built-in crap detectors. They can spot a phony a mile away. I have to tell you, if you want to know what's going on, you just need to take the time.

When I was minister, we didn't have a lot of policy people on the political staff because we felt it was more important to engage in the process with our leaders, secure in the knowledge that there were 710,000 professors all across Ontario who were prepared to give their agriculture, food and rural affairs minister, and anyone else who would care to hear, a lecture on the topic of their choice any day of the week. The trick, Mr. Speaker, is to learn to listen carefully, as we did in the north around some of the challenges there, around the research insti-

tute and some other issues right across this great province of ours.

Local efforts, focused local efforts worked out in consultation with the ag food industry, bear a lot of fruit, both literally and symbolically. I think, for example, of the corn-fed beef industry and the work that's been done with some of the supermarket chains, notably the Loblaw's chain, which, based on a lot of good work and some government support, got us to the point where that food chain decided that they would supplant the imported beef that they were selling on their shelves with good Ontario corn-fed beef. That industry is growing very quickly. We had suggestions from the corn-fed beef folk of the need for some support by way of a ledger account, which our government—and I was pleased to be part of that—was able to foster, and that makes a huge difference.

The establishment of farm markets to showcase the produce that is grown throughout Ontario has been very helpful in spreading the good news. We know from some anecdotal polling that has been done that over 90% of Ontarians go to their local market with the intent of identifying and purchasing Ontario-grown food. There are some difficulties sometimes locating it in the supermarket, and I think we've got some work to do in that regard. That's why our government, through the ministry, has been working closely with the independent supermarket chains and others to identify some of those opportunities and to make sure that we're taking some steps to in fact highlight Ontario produce and to ensure that those who go to the market with a desire to purchase Ontario food are, in fact, assisted. We do the same with our legendary Ontario wine industry, one of the finest in the world, Mr. Speaker, by ensuring that sufficient LCBO shelf space is made available. We're looking at a number of different options to further support the wine industry, not the least of which would be additional promotion of the agri-tourism industry, which has great potential for our producers, the industry and the jobs that can be produced by them.

There has been some predictable criticism of the bill, and it's leaning towards being us having a series of aspirational goals. I just want to speak to that directly. There's nothing wrong with aspiring—inspiring or aspiring—to greater things. It's my firm belief, and I think our government's firm belief, that it's better to aspire together and to arrive together than to be driven prematurely to a situation that may not be in the best interest of all concerned. It's our government's intent to continue to work in a very focused and intentional way with the agri-food industry to learn together what needs to happen, what sort of targets need to be in place, how we can better work to serve the interest of Ontarians. We are moving in that direction.

That has been very well received, frankly, by the various agricultural groups. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been very complimentary with respect to the goals that we've set and the willingness to work together. And no wonder. They worked with our government through our agri-food Open for Business initiative where, over the last couple of years, we've managed together—I

stress this, “together”—to remove some 28% of the regulatory burden faced by the agri-food industry. That Open for Business group, which is co-chaired by the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and now the Minister of Agriculture and Food, continues to work together, to strive together, to identify improvements.

So when people talk about the importance of red tape and being sensitive to our farmers, we get it; we agree. In fact, that’s why, when I was the then minister, I wrote to my critic of ag, food and rural affairs, and invited him to send me a list of all the regulations that were being identified to him for change.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: One day soon it will come, I’m sure. It’s important that we do that. Because regulations come at all different levels. Many of them are federal regulations.

You might, on the other side of the House, want to be aware that there are some moves right now at the federal level to trade off on some of the cheese tariffs—very, very significant. The critic from the third party, who I know well, a former dairy farmer, will know all too well the arguments around supply management and the importance of that and the potential for some real difficulty in the dairy sector if this were to happen. Sometimes, a phone call from a colleague with a philosophy maybe a little bit different than ours to somebody in a position of power federally helps.

There are all kinds of federal regulations, CFIA and a whole lot of other things. There are also a number of municipal regulations around zoning and planning and what have you. We need to be working not in isolation from each other but together to see if there are better ways to make life easier for those who have the enormous respect and the important task of putting the best-tasting, most nutritious and safest food in the world on our tables.

0920

I’ll give you a good example of working together: The greenhouse growers had some real concerns about waste water and some of the requirements around that. They were in conflict with our Ministry of the Environment for a whole lot of reasons, many of which were legitimate; they would acknowledge that. By pulling together the groups to look at some alternative ways of addressing that, we have, for all intents and purposes, resolved that.

On Growing Forward 2 situation, when it was clear that another level of government had a different set of priorities than our stakeholders in the agri-food sector, we were able to pull together the leaders of the commodity groups. It took us about six weeks to share information that wasn’t being as effectively shared as it should have been—not just in Ontario but elsewhere—and to build a coalition in advance of the federal-provincial-territorial conference around the importance of the suite of risk management programs, and eventually to find ways to work with our federal cousins to ensure that the protections our farmers wanted to see in place were, to as large an extent as possible, kept in place.

I look at industries like Fiera Foods, who have won national awards for the work that they’ve done, and some of the support that government has been able to bring to their efforts.

On the risk management issue, we worked with local commodity groups to in fact invite them to lift up their ideas around how that could be more appropriately offered. They in fact did that: They suggested a scheme where they would actually control and distribute and work out problem-solving mechanisms for funding in the Ontario risk-based management program, and we as a government had the courage to not only listen and say thanks but to embrace their scheme. It was a wonderful example of working together.

We’ve had a number of round tables on this act. What we heard as we went around was, “Let’s work together to move the industry forward.” It’s an important industry; we all acknowledge that. It will stand us in good stead if we continue to reflect the attitude of being able to work together and grow together in this great province of Ontario, and to continue to believe that the agri-food industry has not only a place but perhaps the most important place in our growing Ontario economy. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I’m pleased to stand here and comment on the member’s statement. It’s interesting how I heard the words “co-operate” and “work with” and whatever was in these past comments. It’s something that I’m sure the horse racing industry wouldn’t agree on, when we see how they clobbered it. Red tape has been an issue with the farming industry for many, many years, and they keep getting more and more regulation, and this government certainly hasn’t listened to that.

Also, I don’t know why they would put this in the Agriculture Week that we’ve had since 1998, in the week leading up to Thanksgiving; they put it on the same week. Did they not even know that that was Agriculture Week? Again, it’s window dressing.

They claim to be helping the agriculture industry out, and yet they nailed them with a tire tax a couple of weeks ago. We don’t know what else this government is going to do with the farming industry that’s going to hinder them. The industry has been driven out of this province. Mr. Speaker, for your information, in Perth county we have no small abattoirs left. They got tired of the red tape and the fooling around that this government has put on them.

We are all for promoting local food. If you care to read our white paper, you’d see in our white paper that this is what we want to do. But it is getting rid of red tape; it’s taking some regulations from different ministries that overlap each other that farmers get tired of fooling around with. They spend four to five weeks a year doing paperwork. So I’m rather cynical at what this government intends to do with their Local Food Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to join the debate this morning on the Local Food Act and to follow comments from the Minister of Community and Social Services. This is a member that I feel I share some similarities with. We both worked as social workers before and during Parliament and, in fact, our friend used to work with the NDP as well. So I feel—

Interjection.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Oh, sorry. I feel like there are some similarities—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He was a New Democrat.

Mr. Jonah Schein: He was a New Democrat.

So as I've said in my comments on this bill before, the bill as it stands right now is pretty empty. It does give us a week in October to talk about local food. I think there's far more that we can do when it comes to local food in Ontario. But I think that this is actually an opportunity to talk about food issues in Ontario.

The other thing that I share, I think, in principle with my colleague with the Liberals now is that—in the past, when the Minister of Community and Social Services was a backbench member of the Liberal Party, he introduced a private member's bill that was talking about food in a different sense. That's something I would like to remind him of now, as he is the Minister of Community and Social Services, and that was pointing out the gross inadequacy of our social assistance benefits in Ontario. He asked, at that time, that we look at a system of setting rates that actually measured what it cost to live. I would welcome him, as we go into a budget, at some point to look at that information closely to see if there's any person in this province who can actually access healthy food, nutritious food, in Ontario if they're unemployed, if they're on social assistance. Never mind local food; never mind organic food—any kind of food. How do you access food on \$600 a month in Ontario?

I'm optimistic; I'm hopeful. But I would like to see something in the budget when it comes to food access for every person in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to rise to comment on the remarks made by our colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services. As we all know, he was the Minister of Agriculture and Food when this bill was introduced for the first time and, as has been pointed out by the member of Davenport, is someone who is concerned about food security issues as well as local food. Minister, I think we all applaud the efforts you made to engage stakeholders, the types of round tables and consultations, not only here in Ontario but with the federal government and your provincial colleagues when you were minister.

My riding is a great producer of local food. I have my constituency office where the population is greatest, down in the Markham–Richmond Hill area, but I actually live way up at the north end, which stretches all the way to the Holland Marsh. I think everyone in Ontario should be very, very cognizant of the great food production that

occurs in the Holland Marsh. I was given a tour by the head of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association, Jamie Reaume, and I found it absolutely fascinating to see not only the amount of employment that exists in the Holland Marsh, the type of equipment that is necessary—so, obviously, jobs and employment is a key component in the agricultural sector. The more that we promote our local food, the more we are promoting those jobs and that employment.

I travel back to my home from my constituency office every week along the concession roads. We have the most amazing farms, and some very entrepreneurial young farmers who are making their farm really a destination, not only to purchase local food, but to view farm animals and so on. I'm all in favour of this bill. I hope everyone supports it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I also want to show deference to the minister who spoke and who was, at one time, Minister of Agriculture. But I won't comment on his terrible rendition of the musical interlude on agriculture.

However, I do think that he did say something that's important, and I'm going to attribute this to my good friend the member from Oshawa. A vision, as you talked about—but vision without action is simply a dream. Vision with action can indeed change the world. So there is something missing there.

0930

Yesterday I sat and listened to the debate on it. I think it's quite rude, the fact that they're doing this bill—the member from Perth–Wellington, Randy, spoke here just in response to the minister's remarks; he's the parliamentary assistant. Now, he's also in the same riding once occupied by Bert Johnson. Bert Johnson was the person who actually brought in the legislation for celebrating agriculture week. I pay great respect to the member now serving Perth–Wellington.

There was an interlude there for a person that didn't really get agriculture, but they just recently assigned him to do the study on the equine industry. I don't think he did a very good job there, either.

The decimation in rural Ontario is the footprint of the Liberal policies in agriculture. What they've done to the equine industry in my riding is unacceptable and rude. The way it was implemented in a sort of backroom deal reminds me of what they did in Ornge. The disrespect for agriculture is their vision of rural Ontario.

Yesterday I listened to our member from Oxford, who has been the Minister of Agriculture. His heart, his soul and his every action are committed to agriculture.

In fact we almost demonize agriculture. These are the very families that feed Ontario. I think there should be more respect and integrity in our remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, you've got two minutes for a response.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I hardly know where to start. It's such a paradoxical mix of affirmation and critique that would tend to leave one with less excitement about

the ag food industry speechless. But let me give it the best shot I can.

I believe vision without action isn't vision at all; it becomes a nightmare. I think we need to be moving forward.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That's not what the agri-food sector folk say. If you speak to the Christian Farmers or the OFA about our government's steps to work with them—it's very, very positive.

They understand the importance of food sovereignty, as do we. I never, ever want to see my province or my country in a position where we are having to have food sent to us in return for our water or our oil or something else. There are places in the world where we see that happening, sadly, and that will never be here in Ontario.

There are lots of other things that we need to be looking at from an educational perspective and from an infrastructure perspective. There are those who say that we're a petrol-based economy, and in some respects they're right. But there are alternatives to fossil fuels; there aren't any alternatives to water. We're really a water-based economy, and it's particularly true of the agri-food sector. It is very, very important that we conserve our most precious resource, water, and make sure that we're stewarding that well. I know the agri-food sector is keen to do that, as is our government. This bill will help us to move forward in that regard as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I wish to inform you that I want to share my time with my colleague and friend the member for Stormont-Dundas—South Glengarry. I'm glad to have this chance this morning to speak about Bill 36, the government's Local Food Act, here at the second reading.

Last week, I achieved the dubious distinction of reaching the age of 50. I must confess that the older I get, the more I think about food. I was glad to celebrate the occasion with my family, who surprised and delighted me by coming down to Toronto last Monday night. What did we do? Of course, we went out for dinner and we ate our meal together.

As families and as communities, food is almost always part of our special celebrations. But even more than that, food is a basic human need. We need to nourish and sustain ourselves with nutritious food. If we don't, we perish.

This is why our farm families are so important in our society. This is why we should acknowledge and recognize their importance. It is their labour and effort, their ingenuity and knowledge, indeed, it is their passion for a life in agriculture that ultimately feeds us all. There's an old saying in rural Ontario, and it's as simple as it is true: If you ate today, thank a farmer.

The local food movement has really taken off in the province. We now have restaurants that proudly identify the origins of the food that they serve, farmers' markets in many communities selling local produce and specialty

independent grocery stores that have opened—all to cater to the consumer who wants to eat food that's been grown or produced within a 160-kilometre radius of their home, or as it's sometimes called, the 100-mile diet.

We appreciate the idea of local food; the idea that it's fresher, safer and more flavourful; the idea that eating local food has environmental benefits because transportation costs are reduced. But it's more than just a successful marketing strategy. The local food movement has contributed greatly to an enhanced understanding of the importance of our farm families. We know that by buying local food, we support our local farmers and local food processors.

My colleague in the Legislature the member for Perth—Wellington is doing a super job in this House. He's our deputy critic for the Minister of Agriculture and Food, and together, we represent the residents of Wellington county. Mr. Pettapiece spoke on this Bill 36 on Tuesday, and he made a number of very important points. He said that in order to have local food, you need to have local farmers—a simple declaration but a profound statement that we need to reflect upon because agriculture policy needs to spring upon that idea. He's absolutely right, and this is why we need to broaden the scope of this debate to some of the other important issues facing our farm families and our agri-food sector.

I agree with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. We need a continuation of the Ontario Risk Management Program as a fully funded program, which means we need to look at how we can move beyond the \$100-million program cap. Through finding efficiencies and eliminating waste in other programs, I'd like to see us make a concerted effort to try to find a way to do this.

We need research funding to strengthen the long-term competitiveness of Ontario's agricultural sector, and we need to strengthen our partnership with the University of Guelph. We need to give financial incentives to encourage them to adopt new technologies. We need to encourage innovation in energy generation through biogas digestion of manure, crop residue or purpose-grown energy crops. We need to support environmental stewardship practices, food safety and traceability to show how safe Ontario food really is. We need an effective program to promote Ontario-grown food to Ontario consumers.

In other words, we need a Local Food Act and accompanying policies which achieve what the government actually says it wants to achieve. We need to invest in infrastructure. I think of our hospitals, schools, roads and bridges which need to be prioritized. We need to extend natural gas distribution into rural Ontario and deal with the concerns of local rural municipalities. Those are some of the issues we face in rural Ontario, and we need leadership and support from the provincial government to overcome them.

But we have other challenges too. In my riding of Wellington—Halton Hills, some farmers today are facing astronomical increases in the assessed value of their farmland. I've been told that the average increase in

assessment on vacant farmland based on farmer-to-farmer sales is 93.8% over and above the previous assessment. Farmers are rightly questioning this, and those who are angry about it had every right to be.

Meetings have been held. The town of Halton Hills as well as the region of Halton have become involved. Our regional chair, Gary Carr, is pushing hard for our farmers, and I know our local and regional councils would support fairness for our farm families. But many of our farmers have valid outstanding questions that MPAC has yet to satisfactorily answer. I've spoken with my friend Bert Andrews of Andrews' Scenic Acres in the town of Halton Hills. Mr. Andrews is part of the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee and he's a member of the Halton Region Federation of Agriculture. He has done a great deal of research and analysis on this issue. In a recent summary of it, Mr. Andrews concluded that the property tax assessment system is presently broken in Halton.

Here's what needs to happen in response: We need the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Agriculture and Food and the Minister of Rural Affairs to work together and instruct MPAC to review their methodology and come back with a more realistic, fair and accurate assessment of current values in farmland and Halton Hills. Mr. Speaker, the Premier wants farmers to believe their interests and issues are a high priority for her. She wants us to believe that by appointing herself Minister of Agriculture and Food, the concerns of farmers will be given greater weight than otherwise might be the case. She has a chance to prove that by taking immediate action on this farmland assessment issue in Wellington-Halton Hills.

But if she chooses to take no action, farmers will conclude that having a part-time Minister of Agriculture and Food is really no advantage at all and may actually be a disadvantage for farmers in Ontario.

0940

Again, as Randy Pettapiece observed, in order to have local food, you need to have local farmers. Local farmers in Wellington-Halton Hills are dealing with a myriad of problems created during the last 10 years of Liberal government: excessive regulation and red tape which is irritating, time-consuming, costly and does little to make our farms more competitive or profitable; skyrocketing hydro rates—and we know that much of the upward pressure on the hydro bills has been caused by deliberate and misguided policy decisions of this Liberal government; abattoirs closing because of overzealous and excessive regulation; uncertainty in the horse racing industry, caused by their decision to cancel the Slots at Racetracks Program, even though a proper economic analysis has not been done; and the list goes on and on. What does this Bill 36 do to address these problems? Objectively, Mr. Speaker, the answer is, nothing.

In order to have local food, you need to have local farmers. Local farmers in my area were proud in 1998 when the Legislature passed a bill proclaiming Ontario Agriculture Week during the week leading up to Thanks-

giving. Our friend Bert Johnson, then the MPP for Perth, had introduced the bill and he had fought hard for its passage, and was supported unanimously in the House. On this side of the House we ask, how is Bill 36, with its provision to delete the idea of Ontario Agriculture Week implicitly and replace it with Local Food Week, a step forward? Did they even think of this when they were drafting the bill? Why would they want to take away Mr. Johnson's significant and signature achievement in getting the agriculture industry the recognition that it deserves? Why are they taking such a partisan approach to this bill, in contrast to their constant rhetoric about wanting to work with the opposition parties in a spirit of co-operation?

If you want to have local food, you need to have local farmers. The local farmers in Wellington-Halton Hills have been astonished to learn of the Ontario Tire Stewardship fee increases on tractor tires and other agriculture equipment tires. In one case, the fee apparently goes from just over \$15 a tire to \$353 a tire, a 2,200% increase. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture say that they were not informed of these changes in advance, and there was no opportunity for public input or comment. My colleague the member for Oxford has pointed out that no other province has tire taxes even close to the level of this new fee schedule just launched in Ontario. Mr. Hardeman has launched a petition calling upon the government to stop the increases. He deserves credit for helping farmers protest this continued nonsense, which the Liberal government can't blame on anyone but themselves—this same tired, recycled Liberal government that introduces the same Local Food Act as was introduced by the McGuinty government before they prorogued in the House last fall; this same tired, recycled Liberal government who want us to think that they've changed, even though the policy agenda remains largely the same; this same tired, recycled Liberal government propped up on so many key votes by the New Democrats in this House.

I say to the government, listen to the OFA's suggestion that we need to raise the basic food literacy of all Ontarians. We need food awareness programs, including nutrition and food preparation programming and a food literacy component in our schools. And listen to our agriculture critic and deputy critic for agriculture, and take a look at the ideas in our caucus, that our caucus expressed in our white paper on agriculture, where we outline some of our ideas for a better future for farm families, the promise of the future under an Ontario Progressive Conservative government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's a privilege to follow my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills and some of his very informed discussions on rural Ontario and how it's being impacted by this government.

Speaker, Ontario PCs support local food, but unlike this government, we have a long record to prove it. It was a PC government that introduced Foodland Ontario, a symbol that's recognized by over 90% of grocery shoppers.

It's nice to see this part-time agriculture minister forget entirely about taking on her job, then resurrecting the food act without any meaningful changes from the original version, simply a name change. We don't see anything in this act of any substance, other than the promise to consult, the promise to look into things. The people of Ontario, I believe, are getting tired of the promises of this tired government.

We have our white paper on agriculture. We went around the province, consulting with stakeholders. We have the stakeholders themselves, who are very much available to be heard and listened to and available to help this government come up with a meaningful strategy. Sadly, this government once again failed to listen to rural Ontario and seems only to borrow when it carries interest and delivers no outcome.

Speaker, I was born and raised on a farm. I was used to getting up every morning to milk cows and feed them, 365 days a year. Many days, I didn't feel like getting up, but we really had no choice. That was our livelihood. There were long days, especially in the spring and the fall, when you were constantly fighting the weather to get your crops in and then to be placed at the mercy of the commodity prices.

Local food does not come out of thin air. It is grown with love and care by our local farmers. Before local food is eaten by Ontarians, it must be planted, grown, harvested, packed and distributed. If this legislation is seen the Local Food Act, then when do we expect to see concrete steps to facilitate each and every one of the processes to make healthy, tasty, nutritional local food available in Ontario? This part-time ag minister presented us with a dime-sized portion of legislation and served it on a large platter.

Let me tell you what the Ontario PCs would do to further the cause of local food. We would cut red tape for farmers, who would then have more time to spend tending their land rather than doing wasteful and wasted paperwork. We see an average here of farmers spending up to four weeks on paperwork—really very unproductive. It's something that we see in many industries across this province. We see business owners screaming for help: "Get rid of the regulations." But only what we see are more and more regulations.

Easing access to local food by building on the success of the Toronto market—we would open up at least one additional regional food terminal to minimize the distance, to get food to the market, and also to allow our retailers to pick up markets.

I had the opportunity to talk to a local grocery store that is in my riding, in my riding to the north. He talked about his inability to carry local food produce because of the fact that he had to go to the terminal to get the choice, to get the quality that people wanted. There are no options locally, so it makes buying local food almost impossible for the larger chains, because people expect a consistent quality.

This government has tried in so many ways to make a difference, but nothing seems to work. They drove up

hydro costs. They want to micromanage agriculture with red tape. They want to be seen as supporting local food, yet they haven't taken any steps necessary to make this meaningful. We all are left with targets to aspire to, and this minister is asking for information about how local food is used in the government's cafeteria.

Although it is produced locally, Liberal hot air is not a food group, and "eating it up" is just a new phrase. You can't feed Ontarians targets, and farmers can't feed Ontarians unless government gets out of the way.

Minister, just some of the experiences I've had: As a warden back in 2006—at that time, this government had come out with legislation that killed the farmers' markets. I remember leading the charge, and it was only because this government was embarrassed about what they had done that they actually went back on that. It's just an example of not listening to local farmers and the rural community. This was not a farmer issue; this was a rural community, and it actually impacts the larger municipalities that have farmers' markets.

The Minister of Community and Social Services is still waiting—it's interesting—for his list of red tape issues from the current minister. They've had 10 years to put this in place, and it's interesting that he talked about something that goes back that far.

But this is a government that has been killing rural Ontario. It's making it very difficult for our small businesses to continue to service the communities. We have to understand that we are different in rural Ontario. We don't have access to water and sewer up and down all our concessions, nor should we; we're not asking for that. But we need regulations that realize that.

0950

I go back to one of my early days when this government first took over and listening to a councillor in a small town talking about how they had a sports field and had a Johnny-on-the-spot. They tried to aspire to something more, where they actually put in a small washroom, flush toilets and sinks, and they were being told they had to close it down. She stood up with the new regulations and said to the then Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, "Minister, I can't understand this being what your intent was." I remember very clearly the minister jumping up and saying, "That's exactly what we mean. Nobody will die on my watch," and I guess that's a great way of looking at things. The whole point was, "Shut down your toilet. Put the Johnny-on-the spot back. And as long as you don't have to wash your hands, you can't blame it on me." I think that's a very failed philosophy and that's something we've seen around this government for years. They don't think things through.

In rural Ontario we've survived, as has the rest of the province, very well. We may need some help, but we don't need regulations that are actually closing down our businesses. This past summer, I listened to the LCBO at hearings in the communities, and the small wineries talked about how they were being impacted by legislation that doesn't allow them to realistically sell their products.

Later on, I travelled through Prince Edward county just to hear from these large wineries that I was hearing

about. These wineries are five and 10 acres, with people having to sit in a small building on the site in case somebody showed up to buy wine. Imagine the economics of that, and that's the only access they have to the market. It's really sad in this day and age when we have a climate that would really sponsor and encourage wineries. But it's something that this government has failed to see and still, today, ignores. We listened to a cider company come in that has won international awards throughout the world, unable to compete, actually discriminated against. Foreign cider makers that come in are allowed to discount their product, but he is not given the same options.

I really don't see how this government is looking at what's happening outside of the circle of Toronto. The racetrack industry: Could we see a much worse example? They killed an industry without any consultation. You know, we're making this out to be a rural issue, 60,000 rural jobs, but really, this is an example of how this government has no concern about jobs: 60,000 jobs in this province should be of keen interest to support. We saw 58,000 jobs lost just last month, just another sad record of an unemployment rate that's been higher than the national average for years.

The Green Energy Act is another example. Yes, it had an impact on rural Ontario. It split communities; health effects from these wind turbines. But really, you've got to look at the big picture. The economics alone are screaming to cancel this project. We're driving up electricity prices to the highest in North America, and I guess this is one thing they can aspire to being maybe the highest in the world in if they keep going. They're so embarrassed with these prices, they even borrow money to offset the cost of electricity with the green energy benefit, to give us a 10% break. But it's time to quit borrowing money. It's time to actually start paying down our debt and put this province back in order.

I'm proud to have on my vehicle, "If you ate today, thank a farmer," because I think we have to get back and look at our good rural roots and some of the principles that came from there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to speak about agriculture and food in this House, and I'd like to comment on the shared comments of the members from Wellington-Halton Hills and Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Once in a while, a speaker comes up with a phrase that really catches my attention, and the one from the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry really did, that it was a dime-sized portion on a banquet-sized platter. We all want to make local food more accessible. Everyone in this House wants to do that, and in this province, we have the luxury, most of us—certainly everyone in this House has the luxury of talking about good local food and being able to go out and access it. Not everyone in this province has that luxury, and that's something we have to be very mindful of in this House.

Getting back to their comments and to the comments from a lot of people on this side, it seems with this act—

and I heard it one time on a food show—it's not really what's on the plate; it's all about the presentation. If you listen to a lot of the speeches on the government side, if you read the act, it's all about the presentation, not so much about the substance. I think the one thing that is coming through from this side of the House is you have to have substance. I'd like to repeat: We keep hearing about all the consultation we've had, which we don't see any evidence of, and we'd like to see, on our side of the House, in this corner, that the consultation process is enshrined in the act so that we actually know who people are talking to and that they're consulted before decisions are made.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to congratulate and thank the member from Wellington-Halton Hills and also the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry for their comments, although they're always negative comments. It's not surprising that they're coming from a party that pretends to be the actual champions of the agricultural community.

I was a mayor, in fact, when Mike Harris was Premier. I'd like to read from Wikipedia. Wikipedia provides a historical account of what happened. At that time, a former friend of mine who's well respected in the community, Noble Villeneuve, was Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: "Villeneuve was appointed Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and minister responsible for francophone affairs on June 26, 1995. He held these positions until" 1999, "and generally avoided the controversies which affected other ministries. Villeneuve was not regarded as one of the more right-wing figures in the Harris cabinet, though his government presided over considerable funding cutbacks in the agriculture department and the elimination of local representatives." And I've brought to the attention of this House that 42 OMAFRA offices across the province were cut during the Harris years, one of them in my community.

I'd like to quote the member from Oxford on February 17 out of the Ontario Farmer. It's Mr. Hardeman on the Drummond report: "We all agree changes have to be made (and) we have to get our spending under control. I don't think even the agriculture ministry should be exempt from that." Well, Mr. Speaker, they pretend to be champions but, in fact, we know what's going to happen if they were unfortunately ever to serve in government again.

We've done our homework. We've listened to farmers. We've put forward a Local Food Act that respects our farming community, and I expect the other side to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak about Bill 36. When you talk about the bill—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:—the purposes of the bill, in the first section: number 1 is to develop local food economies; number 2 is including the diversity of local food; and number 3 is the development of new markets.

The one aspect that I brought forward that hasn't been developed is—and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane would certainly know. Drive around Ontario, particularly rural Ontario, in, say, about August. What do you see in August everywhere? Blueberry stands like crazy. They're up there and there are huge opportunities. You want to talk about diversity of food and new markets and things like that? Well, I spoke about the fiddleheads that go on out there and I started to get some responses from individuals.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Fiddleheads?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, fiddleheads. The fiddleheads I see in the grocery stores are labeled coming in from New Brunswick.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You talked about those fiddleheads yesterday.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes I did. But since yesterday, I've had a number of calls and inquiries that were brought up about blueberries. Then I got a call—it came to my attention—about the Malloys and how the Ministry of Natural Resources effectively have shut down their maple syrup operation because the Ministry of Natural Resources has made that determination.

But there were so many other things that have now come forward that haven't been mentioned. What about wild rice and the harvesting of wild rice that takes place in the province of Ontario? There's a huge demand for these things that aren't being mentioned, and we're talking about new markets, new opportunities.

I mentioned the fiddleheads and the wild leeks coming forward. Wild leeks are a great opportunity. If you look at some of the things that are out there—the other one that was brought up was wild ginseng. Now what's happening is wild ginseng is completely destroying the Ontario market because it's being harvested without controls. It has a high demand, and there's a market out there for it.

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There's a lot of others things, such as—probably the members have never even heard of spruce tip honey. Effectively, what you do is you take the light-covered spruce tips, you boil them down, you mix them with certain aspects and you'll develop honey. There are markets out there, and if you go on websites, you'll see that there are opportunities.

I think we need to ensure that all these opportunities representing all the diversities in Ontario come forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to stand here today to talk about this bill that's been presented, the Local Food Act.

I want to say that one of the recent debates that we had here the other day that really impressed me was by the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. Everyone in this

House listened very intently, and the reason for that was because this member was actually passionate about the issue. He expressed his feelings and reasons for why the bill wasn't really effective. We all listened, on all sides of the House, very intently.

One of the things the member talked about was milk. I had recently gone to the London District Science and Technology Fair of 2013, in my riding. I was looking at all the projects that were displayed by students from grade 4 to grade 12. I ended up accidentally walking into a stand where one of the presentations was on milk. These two young girls did a presentation on milk. What they did, their scientific experiment, was they left milk out, and they wanted to find out how long until the milk would spoil. They compared chocolate milk to white milk.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane also talked about regulation. When I looked at the results—they had their final experiment out—the chocolate milk was very oily and it was really disgusting. The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane had mentioned that—

Mr. John Vanthof: It's wasn't chocolate milk.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:—it's really not milk. It's a lot of sugar. The actual milk product didn't look as bad. I certainly wouldn't drink it after the results were in, but if I had to choose, I would pick the white milk.

But the whole point was, he also talked about regulation and how important it is to food. We have to make sure the food that we have has the proper regulations, so we know what's going into our bodies. I'd like to see that discussed a little bit more in the House so that we can understand that food is that important that we need to know what's going into our bodies as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I appreciate the comments from the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Oshawa and London–Fanshawe.

It's interesting to talk about the member opposite, and the negative comments on this side. It's hard not to be negative sometimes, Minister. Our job is to point out the missteps of this government, and I think, as all of Ontario is starting to agree, there's no shortage of those missteps.

The latest, I mean, even in presentation—I know that rural Ontario has rallied against this government. They've had no strategy to look after their issues. This latest ploy to become Minister of Agriculture was rushed through, and forgot the Minister of Food—embarrassed about this, they quietly have another swearing-in.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That's a cheap shot, and you know it.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's not a big thing; you're right. But it's just another example of how this government cannot deliver, and they're not delivering to rural Ontario. You've heard for years now about the issues.

The Ministry of the Environment has a big impact on rural Ontario. We've had the Green Energy Act that we've been rallying against. It seems like as long as it's

outside of the CN Tower view, it's an opportunity to take advantage—but some of their impacts, they're going far and wide outside of rural Ontario. I bring up that green energy benefit. Rates are so high that they've decided to borrow billions of dollars just to offset it. Is that an indication that you're embarrassed about your own energy policies?

We look at the tire eco tax—again, I mean, have some respect for the people of Ontario—rural Ontario as well, but the people of Ontario—and quit trying a sham that's just there to fool them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good morning, Speaker. At the request of the member from Durham, I'd like to keep the debate going, and it should continue at this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate? The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to speak on this bill, Bill 36, the Local Food Act. It's unfortunate, by the time on the clock; I will have to get the people who are viewing this on TV to tune in the next time to get the remainder of my notes and my comments that I'll be making today, but I'll try and be as quick as possible in order to give them as much information as I can.

You may remember that just last week I made a statement regarding an organization referred to as RAIN—Rural Agri-Innovation Network—which is promoting local food sources through innovation and information-sharing. I was as delighted to hear about the Local Food Act as they were.

My delight turned to dismay as I finished reading the bill and was left unsatisfied. I was hoping the Local Food Act would be a good plan to promote local food.

In northern Ontario, and in particular Algoma-Manitoulin, we have many local farmers who do good work and provide healthy local options for many communities. These local farmers help ensure healthy communities and food security in our region. They deserve a well-thought-out, polished piece of legislation to support their efforts. This is not that well-thought-out piece of legislation. Once again, another opportunity is missed which would support hard-working Ontario farmers.

If the government was serious—really serious—and interested in promoting awareness of locally produced food, it would have not designated Local Food Week to coincide with Agriculture Week. These two weeks are not the same and there is no reason why proper attention could not be given to both. Here is a perfect example of just wanting to rush through this bill without giving farmers and community members the proper attention they rightfully deserve.

Bill 36, the Local Food Act, provides for the development of voluntary local food goals and targets in consultation with stakeholders. This government loves to go around the block to just cross the street. This is just another plan to make a plan. Let's just address the issues as they come with actual solutions. The government can decide to make a plan without making a bill.

Make a solution and put it in the bill. This is real action. This bill, as it stands, does not establish local food goals or targets. It only creates room to develop those targets. Basically, we are just in the same situation we were in without this bill.

Subsection 5(1) of the bill states, "The minister may direct a public sector organization to provide the minister with specified information in order to assist the minister in," then it goes into describing it in (a), (b), (c) and (d). It goes on to say, under "Public sector organization to provide information ... If the minister directs a public sector organization to provide information, the public sector organization shall provide the information on or before the deadline specified by the minister in the direction."

So my concern—this raises a few concerns with me, Mr. Speaker—is who exactly will appoint the stakeholders to be consulted? How exactly are they going to be consulted? How exactly are they going to be chosen? Who will choose them? Why does this bill not bother to set out any of those parameters?

At this point, it's up to the complete discretion of the minister to involve themselves in the stakeholder process without any guarantees. The Local Food Act should include provisions to ensure local stakeholders are getting the attention they need. The minister should not be given complete discretion in making these appointments.

We have seen this government be called out again and again for lack of transparency. Why do we have just another bill which intentionally ignores transparency? This bill can certainly not be applauded without any mention of transparency processes and measures.

Reading this bill, some serious questions come to mind. Have any stakeholders been consulted before the act was put together? I know in Algoma-Manitoulin alone we have many groups that are concerned about food security, local farming and promoting local foods. This legislation could have been strengthened by taking the time to consult with those who could have benefited by such legislation.

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I am also curious to know if these stakeholders across the province are satisfied with the plan to make a plan, to set goals and targets, or if they too were left unsatisfied.

I can't help but feel, when reading this bill, that it is full of holes. We should be having these discussions with stakeholders right now. We should be enacting a plan, but instead, ministries have put real discussion on the back burner.

In the region of Algoma-Manitoulin alone, there are over 40 local producers who supply our communities with fresh, healthy, local food. These local producers

supply fruits, vegetables, preserves, maple syrup, beef, pork, poultry, eggs, ham, honey, bison, turkey and fish. Northern Ontario not only has a great opportunity to cultivate meat, vegetables and fruit crops, but it also has a thriving aquaculture industry. The Northern Ontario Aquaculture Association provides fresh and local foods for our communities while conducting research and ensuring the stability of our fish stocks.

This is just a diverse sampling of the local suppliers in Algoma-Manitoulin who are creating healthier communities and contributing to a healthy, diverse economy. Promoting fresh, local products is good for the environment and the local economy.

Many stakeholders have not been consulted with. Even the largest local food organizations have expressed dissatisfaction with this bill.

Sustain Ontario, the Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming, which is a province-wide, cross-sectoral alliance that promotes healthy food and farming, had many good policy suggestions that did not make it into this bill. Although this large, province-wide stakeholder was happy with the bill when it was reintroduced so that steps could be taken to ensure an equitable and prosperous food system, they expressed changes they would like to see.

Some of the points they made—I will read out from their letter that they actually presented to the government.

“A well-crafted Local Food Act will help strengthen Ontario’s food and agricultural sector, resulting in social and economic benefits for communities all across Ontario. By recognizing the diversity and potential that Ontario’s various regions hold, we are certain that we can further enhance the economic viability and resilience of Ontario’s regional food and farming sectors.”

It ends by saying: “Premier, we believe the province of Ontario can be a world leader in developing a sustainable local food system that provides nutritious food to healthy Ontarians. There is much to be gained through an aggressive collective effort to make our food system a model for all to follow.”

Mr. Speaker, here are some great suggestions of ways this bill can be strengthened to actually achieve goals of ensuring an equitable, ecological, sustainable food system and ensuring healthy communities. There is no reason why this bill couldn’t take the course—and really take action. No doubt, if more consultation was done and the government wanted to actually create some action, they would have been in this bill.

We know that improving food literacy through nutrition and food preparation programming is a good idea, and addressing the issue of food access, and including regional economic development opportunities, and encouraging environmentally sustainable practices.

It’s a mystery to me why these important points were not included.

Let’s discuss these issues proactively, instead of making easy promises that don’t motivate actual action.

Under the Local Food Act as it stands, the bill permits the gathering of information to assist in creating goals

and targets and celebrating success and progress. It is obvious that you cannot set goals and targets without information. It is good that this bill is allowing the ministry to gather this information, but there are still many holes in this bill—that just don’t make the bill.

We have no answers as to how this information could be gathered, and many of us are left scratching our heads as to why this information was not gathered before the introduction of this bill. Groups like Sustain Ontario have gathered information. Is this government going to consult this information when setting goals and targets?

We also do not know what portion of the ministry resources is currently being devoted to research into fields that will improve and facilitate farm production. If organizations such as Sustain Ontario can do research on local farming, there is no reason why this ministry cannot.

I will end there and start off next week for our great viewers of Algoma-Manitoulin.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Todd Smith: It’s an honour to welcome a good friend of mine and a councillor from the beautiful county of Prince Edward, Robert Quaiff, to the Legislature today.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s my pleasure, and all of our pleasures, to welcome faith leaders from ISARC here in the House today, so give them a welcome and a round of applause, please.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I’d like to welcome the family of page Glory Samouel in the east members’ gallery: her mother, Randa Barsoum Samouel, and brother Emmanuel. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I’d like to introduce Cathy Dobben. She is the mother of Jarrod Dobben, who is a page with us for the next couple of weeks.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I’m delighted to introduce some guests from Italy here to our Legislature: renowned Italian film director and scriptwriter Marco Tullio Giordana, who is here for the screening of his latest movie here in Toronto, film producer Gianluca Bertogna from Lotus Productions, and their lawyer Francesco Caroleo. They’re accompanied by Cristiano de Florentiis, who is one of the founders of the Italian Contemporary Film Festival held here in Toronto every year. Welcome to Queen’s Park. Benvenuti.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I’d like to give a very warm welcome to Tracy Wiersema, the mother of Addison Arone, in the west members’ gallery. Addison is a page here in the Legislature.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s my great pleasure today to introduce the mayor of Enniskillen township, a good friend, Kevin Marriott, down here to support Lisa Thompson’s private member’s bill.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am absolutely thrilled to introduce today the mayor of Kincardine, Larry Kraemer—one of the most beautiful municipalities in Ontario.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce a couple of guests from my riding of Durham: Keith Seaboyer, as well as Phil Coulter. They're here to speak to us about jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How easily they forget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It came to me.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would ask the indulgence of the House to allow me to make the following: A long-time member of staff of ours, Norm MacAskill, unfortunately found his wife dead last night when he arrived at home. I would ask the members of this assembly to take a few seconds just to ponder on that, just how precious life can be. We grieve for the loss to Mr. MacAskill, his family and those that knew her. Linda was a great person.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is the member asking for unanimous consent?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just announcing? I appreciate that, and I am sure all members grieve with the family.

Further introductions?

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the republic of Uzbekistan, led by the Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, the Honourable Diloram G. Tashmukhamedova. Welcome to our delegation today. Thank you very much. We appreciate you being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday I was in Niagara, at Stanpac manufacturing. They make world-leading packaging for food products. They have a plant in Ontario, and they have a plant in Texas. They tell me, Premier, that the costs of energy for the plant in Texas are 69% lower than here in the province of Ontario. Then they tell me they hear from the auditor's report about the Mississauga gas plant cancellation—a tale of corruption and abject mismanagement.

What kind of signal do your energy policies send to employers like Stanpac? Doesn't that tell them to send the jobs down to Texas, when we in the PC Party have a better plan to have those jobs right here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm proud to live in Ontario and I'm very proud that we have put in place a long-term energy plan that will be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton, come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When you look at the overall conditions for industry, employment and quality of life in Ontario, whether we talk about our excellent health care system, our world-class education system, our infrastructure and the reality that we have a 20-year, long-term energy plan that we began to put in place when we came in office in 2003 because the energy sector was in such disarray after the previous government had been in office, I believe that we have all the fundamentals to bring industry to Ontario, and that's what's happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I'm disappointed the Premier took that answer—

Interjection: We all are.

Mr. Tim Hudak: We all are. Of course the folks at Stanpac are proud of our province of Ontario. They've built a company here. They've got a strong, competitive team that works at Stanpac, but they're not proud of what the Auditor General came up with when it came to that Mississauga gas plant scandal—a story of corruption, a story of extraordinary mismanagement. I would have expected the Premier to stand on her feet today and say that was wrong and say who was going to be held accountable and say we're going to turn things around.

Some 69% higher, Premier. They want to buy new machines, injection molding machines; hire 40 new people. I want to see those jobs here in Ontario. I want to see those jobs in Niagara and Hamilton, not down in Texas.

When they see the scandals of the gas plant and your green energy policies that are going to drive prices 40% to 60% higher, I stand with Lisa Thompson, the member from Huron—Bruce, and support her bill to turn off the taps and get our hydro prices under control. Premier, will you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition's passion on this, but my understanding is that a leading source of farm revenue in Texas is wind power. So, in fact, the jobs that we have brought to Ontario, the fact that we have jump-started a green energy sector, I think, speaks highly of our understanding of the future.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Part of what we have done in this province is we have created green energy jobs. We jump-started an industry that really didn't exist in Ontario. I understand that we need to move forward in a thoughtful and collaborative way, but it was our responsibility to put some stability into the energy sector. That's what we've been doing. That's why we have a long-term plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-ary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's disappointing that the Premier doesn't seem to have a grasp of some of the basic impacts of energy policy on our competitiveness as a province. Do wind turbines exist in other parts of the world? Of course they do, but what don't exist are the exorbitant subsidies—that they pay up to 60% more for power—that are driving jobs out of our province. What doesn't exist in other states and provinces is the kind of scandal and corruption behind their deals in the Mississauga gas plant and Oakville.

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We have a choice to make, Premier. Do we want those jobs in Ontario, or are you going to chase those jobs south to Texas and other jurisdictions? Are you going to slam on the brakes and go in the opposite direction and invest instead in reliable, affordable energy and bring these expensive experiments to the room? You said, Premier, that you were going to change the direction when it comes to these feed-in tariff programs, the expensive wind turbine projects, but you're sounding a lot like Dalton McGuinty all over again. Will you stand up and support Lisa Thompson's bill and bring jobs back to our province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just be clear. What the Leader of the Opposition is talking about is killing clean energy jobs. That's what he's talking about. The other thing that the member opposite is talking about is turning the clock back on the reduction of air pollution. The underlying reason for getting into this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock for a second. As it is a whole just mammoth voice coming out of here, I'm going to pick individuals. I'm starting with the member from Prince Edward-Hastings. Then, if I pick you off, regrettably, you're going to feel the wrath of my dissatisfaction with not being able to hear any of the answer and hearing the entire question.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is an economic imperative and there is a social imperative, a health imperative, of having green energy and shutting down the coal-fired plants. You talk to families of children who have asthma and they will tell you that they want the air to be cleaner because they want their children to be able to participate. We know that the actions that we've taken are making a difference, and we're going to continue to keep that plan in place.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier. Through the media clippings today, we're seeing that finally they're getting it. Mainstream media is

citing the fact that you cannot be trusted any longer. I can tell you that no one trusts your long-term energy plan, either. I hesitate to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please stop the clock. I'm sorry, I did not hear who the question was directed to.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton can discuss it all she wants. If it wasn't said, it has to be directed. Please.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier. Today in mainstream media clippings we're seeing that people are finally getting it. People just don't trust you any longer, and honestly, we can't trust your long-term energy plan either, which, I'm afraid to say, I even hesitate to call a plan. The only thing that you are doing is driving up energy rates. The expansion of wind energy under your plan is not cost-efficient. It will raise energy costs to families and businesses another 40% to 50%—60% even. Municipalities, families and businesses want relief now. You just don't understand the magnitude. Will you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The whole issue of wind generation is a very controversial issue. There are people on all sides of the issue. I would like to show the side of the issue that my official critic, the member from Nipissing, is on. We've had a very successful green energy program, but don't take my word for it. Let's ask the member for Nipissing about the value of local green energy.

While mayor, he said this: "Taking advantage of locally available green power resources is a good fit with the long-range development strategy we have for this community"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order. The member from Dufferin-Caledon, come to order—

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—"I am particularly pleased with the relationship we have struck with West Wind Development Inc. for the first half of the project. I am confident that the company's reputation as a responsible wind power developer can put North Bay on the map as a showcase for the sensitive and responsible development"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Quite frankly, I liked his answer yesterday when he forgot the question.

My question goes back to the Premier. Premier, the laughter and the mocking on your side of the House is disrespectful. I know that people at home and here in the gallery and the people who are watching today aren't laughing when they open their electricity bills every month. Ontario now has the highest rates in North America, and we're looking at increases of 40% to 60%.

You have to face the fact, Premier, that your green energy scheme is nothing but a job killer. The Fraser Institute report last week reported that the manufacturing sector has become the hardest hit by your green energy scheme. Premier, will you finally stand up for manufacturing and stand up for Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, I'm pleased that she raised the question of the Fraser Institute report. The Fraser Institute report recommends that we go back to coal. They claim that coal is clean, and they're recommending we go back to coal. Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West is warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, our emissions record has been recognized across North America. Not only that, but our emissions record, because of the reduction of coal-burning generation, has been commented on by the federal minister of external affairs, Mr. John Baird, who is a former Minister of Energy here. He took unbelievable credit for Canada's and Ontario's record in reducing emissions by eliminating dirty coal.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Premier, I'm going to give you one last chance. It's too late for the 600,000 who have already lost their jobs here in Ontario, but it's not too late to work together to move forward with a solid, reliable, affordable energy plan.

Premier, you say you like to listen, so with all due respect, listen up. Municipalities want change. Families need change. The manufacturing and business sector needs change. Premier, you keep saying you are open to meaningful conversation. Well, Premier, let's have some meaningful conversation in committee with the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act.

Last chance, Premier: Will you support Ontario families, municipalities and businesses today and send the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act to committee?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have stated that we have a number of ministries presently working on new rules to give more control to municipalities. But the opposition has become obsessed with one issue. They've lost their way on energy. They think transmission is what's under the hood of a car. They think microFIT is a Speedo. They think generation is a period of 25 years.

They don't talk about their own white paper on energy, which will privatize Hydro One and all the transmission across the province. They will privatize Ontario Power Generation and all the nuclear fleet. It is irresponsible. They never talk about it because they're embarrassed by their own policy.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, Ontario's Auditor General testified that, as of last July—that's nine months ago—the OPA had already spent \$245 million on the cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville this morning compared the cancellation to the moon shot. Well, by July, the Eagle had landed and the costs were known. But for nine months, the Liberal government has been telling Ontarians the cost was something otherwise. The minister claims he's relying on the OPA for his financial numbers.

Why did the Liberal government spend nearly a year claiming that it cost \$190 million to cancel Mississauga when the OPA had already spent \$245 million?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Auditor General spent over half a year—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Durham, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—working on a very complex, technical file. He worked—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Durham, come to order—second time. One more and you'll be warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—with the Ontario Power Authority. The auditor has admitted that he has had access to all the information, all the files. He has produced a report. We have accepted the report.

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We have acknowledged that we need to do better in siting our energy infrastructure. The Premier has expanded the mandate of the committee to enable the committee to make those determinations. They apparently are not happy to start working on expanding the areas and the knowledge and the rules around siting infrastructure in cities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ontario's Auditor General said that the OPA gave him almost all the numbers that he produced. We asked if the minister could call up the OPA and get those numbers themselves.

Will the Premier tell her Minister of Energy to contact the OPA today and find out how much they estimate it cost to transfer that plant from Oakville to Napanee?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Over a period of over half a year, the OPA was working side by side with the auditor, going over documents. All documents, all information, was provided to the auditor, working with the OPA—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—so I can't understand the question. Now that the auditor has reported independently, he wants us to go back and review the auditor's work. How ridiculous.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, the public service is filled with qualified and talented people. The Auditor General said he was confident that the public service would have the ability to come up with a pretty good estimate of how much it cost to cancel the Oakville gas plant.

You have all the tools you need to bring forward that Oakville price, and you probably have all the numbers at the end of a phone line.

Premier, how much will Ontarians be paying in their taxes and electricity rates for the Liberal decision to cancel the Oakville plant?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The part that is yet to be allocated—part of it has been allocated to the fiscal plan. The balance that has not been allocated is going to be calculated in the rate base over a period of 20 years. It is going to be calculated, along with the Niagara tunnel, the Matagami hydro plant that's being created, and all the other infrastructure. Billions of dollars of infrastructure are being invested in our system, a lot more than the opposition party ever thought of investing in the system, and it deteriorated under them.

The rates will be determined out of all of those infrastructure projects, and the impact of the Mississauga plant will have a small impact in the scale of all those investments that we're making.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, people are looking for some sign from this government that playing politics with private power deals has hurt this province. Instead, they're seeing more of the same old politics: the need of the Liberal Party coming ahead of the needs of the people, and doubling down on the same strategy of evasion and stonewalling.

Why can't the Premier, at the very least, admit that this strategy was wrong and apologize?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I said, when I came into this office, that we were going to fully co-operate with any of the requests and any of the questions that the members of the opposition wanted to have answered. In fact, we went beyond that. I said, "Let's expand the mandate of the committee looking into this issue. Let's make sure that the committee can look at all of the information and can ask any questions that they want." I have done everything I can to make sure that where there are questions, we will provide the answers. That's why I said I'd appear before committee. That's why I asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville plant decision.

The Auditor General will look at the numbers that are available to him, and we will make sure he has access, as he did with his Mississauga report, and he will make his report as the professional accountant that he is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, here are the facts: The government signed private power deals without any real

consultation. When it became politically inconvenient, they cancelled the deals and did everything they could to hide the real costs from the people who would be paying the bill. Even now, as witness after witness comes forward, the government says they knew nothing of the costs all along.

The Premier keeps doubling down on the same strategy of evasion and stonewalling. Does the Premier think that this is the sort of positive change a new government should be offering?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader is going to want to comment on some of the committee proceedings, but I really need to take issue with the accusation that we are not providing all the information that should be provided.

I need to say that when I came into this office, I was very clear that there were questions that needed to be answered. I was very clear that we would put in place a process that would allow those questions to be answered, and that everybody to whom there was a question would be available and would appear before the committee. That's what we've done, Mr. Speaker.

It's the accusation about evasion that I really need to challenge. That is not what we're doing. We're providing all the information that is being asked for. We have opened up the process. That's what I said I was going to do and that's what I've done.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you haven't read my determination, I'll get even tougher.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: For people feeling the squeeze in tough times, the Premier's answer is hard to take. When it comes to their priorities, the government says that nothing is possible. They have to accept cuts at hospitals and chaos in the classrooms, and they're being asked to pay more. When they see their government find billions for corporate tax giveaways and handing millions to private power companies and US hedge funds to make their problems go away, they're obviously concerned. When they look to their government for some explanation, they get more of the same evasion and excuses.

When is this Premier going to say, "This was wrong, our priorities are out of whack," and finally apologize to the people of this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: You know—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the crocodile tears over there.

There are two points I think we need to put on the record. First of all, the New Democratic Party was in favour of cancelling both plants and actively campaigned

for it. The second thing that I find quite shocking is that they stand up now, wringing their hands, talking about costs, yet last summer, when the former Minister of Energy communicated with the committee that was asking for documents that those documents could jeopardize the commercial negotiations that were going on and drive up the cost for taxpayers, they said they didn't give a damn and they wanted all the documents. They forced the matter through the committee with no regard for the taxpayers or the ratepayers of Ontario.

They're a little late coming to the party here with their crocodile tears.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Today we heard more testimony at the justice policy committee that puts your words at odds with reality. Former Deputy Energy Minister David Livingston, under oath—

Interjection: David Lindsay.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: David Lindsay—there are so many who have been there—told us that the Premier's office and the minister's office knew there would be more costs than just sunk costs tied to the Oakville gas plant cancellation. He also told us that it was normal practice for him to brief the minister on costing updates he had received from the Ontario Power Authority.

Premier, we know you were in the July 29 cabinet meeting where the cancellation costs were discussed. Will you tell us why you keep putting the interests of the Liberal Party ahead of those of the taxpayers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: We have a process in place where the Auditor General has, first of all, looked into the situation in Mississauga. He's now looking into the situation at Oakville. I think we should wait for the Auditor General to come forward.

This game that the opposition is playing of standing up and demanding costs—you know what? The member who just asked the question had this to say yesterday to the press: He said, "We don't believe any of the government's numbers. We can't believe any numbers whatsoever."

Just like the budget, Mr. Speaker. They haven't read it; they're going to vote against it. When they ask us for numbers, they say they won't believe anything we say anyway.

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We have a process with the Auditor General, but the more important question is the same one I asked the New Democratic Party: Why did he and his colleagues, last summer, insist upon jeopardizing sensitive commercial negotiations that would have seen an increase in the cost of cancelling the plant? Why did they say they didn't care about the taxpayers last summer?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Mr. Lindsay didn't stop there, Premier. There is a November 2011 document that I'll quote:

"Idea is that Bentley needs to refer to taxpayer versus ratepayer."

I asked Mr. Lindsay if he knew what this document meant, and his answer was simple. He said, "Unfortunately, I do." He backed up what the auditor had said to us about how you changed the wording from "total cost" to "cost to taxpayer." A month after your cancellation—only a month after the cancellation—you had already decided to hide the fact that costs were more than admitted to.

Premier, you're not open, you're not transparent, and it's clear you'll always put the needs of the Liberal government ahead of the needs of the taxpayers. Why should Ontarians trust you with their hard-earned tax dollars any—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The member cannot ignore the question I put to him and the New Democratic Party. Why, last summer, did they show total disregard for the Ontario taxpayer in demanding those documents?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Cambridge, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: You want to talk about the auditor's testimony? Here's what he had to say about—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Oxford, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —sensitivity yesterday in front of the committee, and I quote the auditor.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: You'll want to hear this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know I'd want to hear it. The member from Oxford is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: You'll want to hear this. This is what the Auditor General had to say about commercial sensitivity: "To put it in layman's language, it's like in poker: You don't show the people around the table your cards," and yet, Mr. Speaker, they showed absolute disregard.

This is what Shelly Jamieson, the former secretary to cabinet, had to say about commercial sensitivity: "Well, it would have harmed the negotiations for sure. Nobody likes to ... have all their paper about what they're talking about out before the conclusion of the deal."

The crocodile tears are a little much today.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Two weeks after the first news stories told us that over 1,000 patients in Ontario received the wrong dosage of chemotherapy drugs, immense confusion remains. Today, Ontarians still have no reassurance that what occurred in those four hospitals could not hap-

pen again or is not happening right now, because while the minister has dealt with one of the unregulated facilities supplying chemotherapy drugs to our hospitals, she cannot even name the others and they continue to operate without oversight.

My question is simple, Premier: After all we've learned this week about how the health minister failed Ontarians, does the Premier think that her health minister is doing a good job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, I do. I do think the Minister of Health is doing a good job. I think the Minister of Health is doing an excellent job. The Minister of Health—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's right. The Minister of Health responded as soon as she knew that there was an issue. She is working to make sure that the expert panel looks at the situation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham will withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —put in place an expert panel to review the situation. Dr. Jake Thiessen is in place to make sure that we find out what the issue was, where the systemic issue was, if there is one. It is absolutely clear to me that every patient—there has been an attempt and I think every patient who has been affected has been contacted so they can see their oncologist.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: While we are hearing some excuses as to what this government and her minister did, it has become obvious that her minister failed to provide even the most basic oversight of private, for-profit chemo drug suppliers. We are hearing that everyone else is to blame, but not her ministry.

Ontarians are tired of hearing excuses, and they expect the Minister of Health to do her job, to take her responsibility to oversee and her responsibility to safeguard our health care system seriously. Will the Premier demand that her minister stop passing the buck and admit that what happened was because of the lack of her minister's oversight of those facilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The first thing I need to do is point out a very unfortunate lack of accuracy in the first question. All of the hospitals that deliver chemotherapy have reviewed their protocols. We know that the 77 hospitals in Ontario that provide chemotherapy have a safe and secure supply of that. So let's not frighten patients, and let's get to the root of the problem.

Later this morning, I will be speaking to the federal health minister because this is a national issue. We are taking responsibility for what's happening in Ontario, but Health Canada has the power to go into these facilities. They can go in today, Speaker.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. In my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River, my constituents appreciate the value of staying active and keeping fit in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They certainly know that participation in sporting activities for Ontarians, whether recreational or professional, is crucial to improving their quality of life.

That is why support for coaches is equally essential in fostering healthy, friendly competition and good sportsmanship, something I know a lot about as a former soccer coach myself. We need to recognize their dedicated efforts, which allow our athletes to develop the capacity to reach their full potential.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please update us on how our government is supporting Ontario coaches?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Scarborough–Rouge River for asking the question. I'm proud to say that this week is Ontario Coaches Week, and we are recognizing the province's coaches who dedicate themselves to our athletes, both amateur and professional. This past weekend, the Ontario Coaching Excellence Awards also honoured our coaches at every level, including school sports and high performance.

Since 2007, we have invested over \$6 million in the National Coaching Certification Program, the enhanced coaching program and the Sport for More Program. In addition to our coaches, we have also invested about \$10 million in Ontario's athletes through the Quest for Gold program.

Our investment will help Ontarians to maintain a healthy lifestyle well into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm confident in knowing that with the government's support of Ontario's coaches and athletes, we are on the right track to success.

As we all know, sports and recreation are essential in ensuring the health and well-being of Ontarians. Investment in sport and recreation also creates jobs, improves sports facilities and increases our daily active routines.

Ontario's support for sport and recreational programs is reflected across the province through essential funds delivered by key service partners. Ontario athletes are directly benefiting from the province's investments that allow them to achieve even greater success.

Can the minister elaborate on how else this government is supporting the sports and recreation sector across our great province?

Hon. Michael Chan: Today, I will be welcoming to Ontario Mario Vázquez Raña, president of the Pan American Sports Organization. He is visiting from Mexico to review ongoing progress of our 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games, a "People's Games" that will be affordable, accessible and an exceptional experience for athletes and visitors to our great province.

Since 2003, our government has provided \$720 million in funding to sport and recreation programs—\$23 million this year alone. Since 2006, over \$634 million has been invested in more than 1,100 infrastructure projects.

I'm also proud to inform that tonight I will be attending the Ontario Sport Awards to recognize top athletes and coaches.

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POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. There's an old saying, "Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practise to deceive."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you—

Interjection: It's unparliamentary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw? I didn't direct it at anybody, but I will withdraw it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't make any comments. The member will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: In committee this morning, David Lindsay, the former Deputy Minister of Energy, made it clear. He testified that he knew that there were costs in addition to the so-called sunk costs figure being used by your government. He knew and you knew. This applied to both Mississauga and Oakville.

Premier, you've been caught on Mississauga. Why will you not stand in your place and do the right thing? Will you not end this disastrous charade you've been playing and, today, reveal all of the costs—not just what you get asked for specifically, but all of the costs related to the Oakville power plant cancellation and relocation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I was unaware that at US Republican media training you were supposed to begin with a poem, but I congratulate him on his Tea Party influences.

Again, there are a couple of facts we have to put on the record here. The first is that the Auditor General is looking into both matters and has reported on the Mississauga plant. He will be reporting on the Oakville plant. The member's colleague said it doesn't matter what numbers the government produces—just like the budget—they want to have nothing to do with it.

The second thing, as I said, is that last summer I wish that we had had this passion and concern about costs and about the impact that certain decisions would have when the committee was demanding that the government release certain documents which would have put at commercial risk very, very sensitive negotiations that were going on. That concern was quite absent last summer, and it's a little rich that it has come here so late.

At the end of the day, we have a process in place. It involves the Auditor General, and we look forward to his report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier. It's unfortunate the Premier has resorted to the same tactics as her predecessor: refuse to answer the question and pass it to the House leader—shame.

It was made pretty clear in the previous question and by Mr. Lindsay this morning that he knew well the costs borne by the taxpayers are still costs. Costs are costs no matter who pays them, taxpayers or ratepayers, there's no difference. Surely you must know that, Premier, too. So the conclusion is clear: When we talk about costs related to the cancellation of these plants, we mean all costs—those paid by the taxpayer and the ratepayer.

Premier, the people are getting impatient. They're waiting for the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It's your move, Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Let's review the facts. The Progressive Conservative Party opposed the building of both the Oakville and the Mississauga gas plants. They campaigned on it. The leader of the party made a YouTube video where he proclaims to his adoring candidates and the six other people who were there to view it that if he is elected as Premier it will be "Done, done, done."

The fact of the matter is they wanted to get to the bottom of it. We offered them a select committee. They said no; they wanted to go on a witch hunt. What we've done is we've brought in the Auditor General. He has issued one report and he will issue another report on the Oakville situation. Again, that does not take away from their responsibility last summer, when they put very sensitive negotiations at risk by demanding documents of the former Minister of Energy and basically said that they could care less about the taxpayers of this province.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Paul Miller: To the Premier: In Hamilton tonight there is a forum with major stakeholders to discuss precarious employment. Landmark studies by Ontario's law commission, McMaster University and the United Way of Toronto suggest that 40% of GTA and Hamilton workers exist in a kind of job hell, with low wages, no job security and no benefits. Will this government act on the many constructive recommendations coming from these landmark studies, or will it once again side with its banker friends and do nothing to improve the lives of Ontario workers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the honourable member for asking a very important question. I'm very much aware of the Law Commission of Ontario report that was released on April 3, and I thank the law commission for doing very good work. In fact, the Ministry of Labour was a member of the advisory panel, a group in the Law

Commission of Ontario, throughout the whole consultation.

We're happy to receive the recommendations. We're reviewing the recommendations. We look forward to more conversations to ensure we continue to fight poverty, that we continue to fight precarious employment.

We know that when one of us succeeds, the whole community succeeds, and we're going to continue to build on our record of ensuring that vulnerable workers, those who are the working poor in our communities, have the resources available to grow in their communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton and manufacturing centres across Ontario have lost 300,000 good-paying jobs since 2005, and in their place we have the kind of temporary, low-paying, no-benefit jobs that these recent studies suggest make up almost half of the so-called new jobs. Will this government listen to the millions of Ontarians who are desperate for good jobs, or will it continue to support the labour practices of companies like the Royal Bank and ignore the recommendations of these landmark studies?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm happy to take the aspect of this question that deals with manufacturing, including in Hamilton, but I have to admit I'm a little bit confused, because the fact is that Hamilton, over the past couple of years, has done extraordinarily well. When you look at the facts again, Site Selection magazine has indicated—here are the facts, folks: Hamilton attracted more industrial and commercial development than any other city in Canada over the past year, according to Site Selection magazine.

The facts are that Hamilton had 20 new construction or expansion projects, each with at least \$1 million invested, at least 50 new jobs created in each one of those projects, or at least 20,000 new square feet, between June 2011 and June 2012. Hamilton has an unemployment rate which is lower than the provincial average. In fact, it's a city that I'm very proud of, and I know the member—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I understand that the Minister of Health and also the minister responsible for seniors earlier today announced a very important expansion of access to physiotherapy, exercise and falls-prevention classes for both seniors and other patients in need across our province of Ontario. These services are especially important to the seniors of my riding. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please inform this House of what this expansion entails for Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: First, I'd like to thank the hard-working member from Vaughan for this very important question.

We know how important physiotherapy can be for people who are getting back on their feet after a stroke or surgery or some other condition. In his recent report, Dr. Samir Sinha recommended that we expand access to physiotherapy services for our seniors, so this morning I was delighted to be joined by the Ontario Physiotherapy Association to announce that more one-on-one physiotherapy, more group exercise classes and more falls-prevention programs will be offered in long-term-care homes and in community settings right across the province. By changing how we deliver physiotherapy services, Speaker, more than 200,000 more seniors will benefit from additional services, including clinic-based physiotherapy services, in-home physiotherapy and exercise and falls-prevention in the community. Indeed, we expect that with this change, we'll be able to eliminate the wait-list.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for her response. This is definitely great news for Ontarians, and especially for seniors. It's great to know that our government is taking action to ensure a more even distribution of these very crucial services while providing better access for patients and more sustainable care.

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Can the minister please inform this House of how these services will continue to benefit seniors across Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted with the question from the member from Vaughan, the fastest-growing city in Canada.

I'm proud to say that our government is taking direct action to ensure that over 200,000 additional seniors and patients will enjoy increased access to these important services. More seniors will receive physiotherapy services in the comfort of their homes, allowing them to live longer and more independently. These changes will provide exercise and falls-prevention classes for some 68,000 more seniors across the province, benefiting over 130,000 seniors in total.

Our government is committed to consulting with patients, health care partners and service providers to ensure that our seniors benefit on an ongoing basis from these improvements.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Education. Tonight, OSSTF will ratify the \$100-million secret deal with your government after a year of creating turmoil in our schools. While you continue to defy logic and suggest the deal won't cause parents and boards any money, your own Liberal leader did say that you were moving money around the education budget.

If there really are savings in the education budget, why is the Toronto District School Board considering cutting music programs? Why is the Ottawa-Carleton District

School Board facing a \$900,000 shortfall for renovating one school? Why did the Toronto Star, even today, suggest that you're not actually adequately funding full-day kindergarten? Your government is moving money around all right, but you're just moving it to the unions from the kids.

My question to you, Minister, is this: Why not admit today that your \$100-million deal is going to be funded off the backs of students in this province?

Hon. Liz Sandals: There is so much misinformation there, I'm not quite sure where to begin. Let's start with the funding of music programs, not just in Toronto, but in every school board around the province. We provide funding for every program that is required in the curriculum. Music is required in the curriculum, both elementary and secondary. We in fact fund, through the base funding for students, the music curriculum. In Toronto, that happens to be \$1.2 billion per year, and we haven't changed that. But interestingly, because we recognize that elementary teachers are useful—there are some—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, she makes no sense at all. I've asked her several times for verification of the \$100-million deal. She won't say it. We know that they are going to ratify this \$100-million deal tonight. We know ETFO is going to have close to a \$100-million deal soon, and we know that there are going to be me-too clauses for OECTA, as well as for AEFO. That tells me that this is going to run up a pretty steep tab of maybe \$300 million when it's all said and done, and that money will be taken from student programming, make no mistake about that.

Earlier today, trustee Caroline Smith of the Simcoe County District School Board tweeted that a whopping 85% of their operating budget is on staff salary and perks. Given the backroom deals with teachers' unions, it seems the minister will only be happy when 100% of that budget is salaries and perks.

So I want to know: Why are you putting students in the middle of this? Why are you taking from our kids in our classrooms when we need to fund FDK? We need to fund class sizes. That is what your previous government said. You're putting rural schools at risk—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. *Interjection.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will remind the member—stop the clock, please—that when I stand, you sit, and when I asked everyone else to be seated, you were still talking. So I'm asking you to pay attention to the Speaker, please.

Answer.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Actually, the member is correct that about 85% of the budget of school boards goes towards compensation; 85% of the budget went toward compensation for decades. This is not new news. In fact, we have saved, as I've said many times here, \$1.8 billion.

We will continue to save \$1.8 billion, and because we have controlled the compensation, that means we can keep putting money into the classroom.

In concluding, in full-day kindergarten, which those folks over there think we should cancel, because we have made savings in the compensation budget, we are able to continue the roll-in of full-day kindergarten. We are not taking money from any program.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased, as I said before, to welcome faith leaders today from the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, ISARC, to Queen's Park.

To the Premier, we support ISARC's call for government action to address the unacceptable levels of poverty and inequality in Ontario. One action ISARC urges is an end to the punitive clawback of employment earnings from people on social assistance. The NDP has called for an end to the clawback of the first \$200 of monthly earnings by OW and ODSP recipients.

Will the Premier, at the very least, commit to make this change and help over 50,000 social assistance recipients maintain their dignity and get back to work?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I will be visiting with the ISARC folks later on today.

This is one of the issues that has been raised by the third party. It's something that I have said quite clearly is a priority for us. It's something that we want to work on with the third party.

The Brighter Prospects report that was written by Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh is something that we have talked about. I talked about it during my leadership run. I said that, for me, it was the starting point for the next phase of our Poverty Reduction Strategy, remembering that we do have a Poverty Reduction Strategy in this province because we brought that into the Legislature. There's legislation in place.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the member opposite is raising this question. It is something that we are concerned about and it's something that we want to move on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Sadly, it's a particular affront to low-income families that it is this government, your government, that's cut programs that help the very poorest Ontarians, like the community start-up benefit, which helps people avoid homelessness, like the Special Diet Allowance, while wasting hundreds of millions of dollars on gas plant cancellations and still planning more than a billion new dollars in tax cuts to the biggest corporations.

Will the Premier just say yes to helping social assistance recipients who are being kept in poverty because of the punitive rules, and just say yes to ending the clawback on the first \$200 they earn each month?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said that this is an area that we very much are interested in working on. I think that there are a number of issues that are raised by

the Brighter Prospects report, the Lankin-Sheikh report, that we need to move on. I've said that to the leader of the third party; it's very much a concern of ours.

I agree with the member opposite that the tangle of rules and the restrictions that are in place that keep people from getting into employment, that keep them from staying in employment, those are the things that need to be straightened out, absolutely. We need to make sure that everything we're doing as a government is supporting people getting into the workplace and allowing them to stay there, not holding them back and deterring them from having employment.

We're going to work on this. We want to move on it. We want to move on implementing the Brighter Prospects report. I've said that to the leader of the third party.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: My question is directed to the Attorney General. A divorce is a very difficult thing for a family to experience, and especially difficult for the children. Children are the innocent bystanders of marriage breakdowns; they may feel like they are losing everything. Grandparents may be a stabilizing, supportive and loving influence for their grandchildren.

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I've recently introduced a private member's bill into the House, co-sponsored by the members from Whitby-Oshawa and Parkdale-High Park, to help ensure grandparents can be there for grandkids during these difficult times when a marriage breakdown occurs. This is a topic I know grandparents and families across this province are deeply concerned about.

Mr. Speaker, can the Attorney General please tell this House what the government has done to support children, parents and grandparents in the courts?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I want to congratulate this member for his tireless and passionate advocacy on behalf of children and on behalf of the relationship that children have with their grandparents. He's well-known in this House to be especially concerned about the relationship they have with their grandparents.

Our government is absolutely committed to support families through the divorce and family law process, and the important part that grandparents play in that whole situation. We recognize the role that grandparents play in the lives of their grandchildren. Every grandparent has the ability to obtain an order of access to their grandchild under Ontario law if it's found by the court to be in the best interest of the child.

We look forward to the discussions on this private member's bill. I can assure him that my ministry will be taking a very close look at it and doing whatever we can in order to bring grandparents closer and more involved in these very difficult situations. We will take a look at the bill and be very positive about the relationships—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Kim Craitor: My supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

First of all, Minister, thanks for the answer.

I'm interested in, also, the well-being of children in protective custody. I have been through the children's aid society myself and was raised through them. Very fortunately, I was looked after by some very caring and special people in my life.

Living in a new environment and separated from loved ones is extremely difficult and daunting for any young person. Having positive relationships and access to the right supports is extremely important.

My question is, how is our government ensuring that we are doing our best to improve the experience of young people in their care?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, and thank you as well to the member for his question and for his advocacy on this issue, one that really speaks to the importance of that relationship that we each have with our grandparents and that every child should have with their grandparents. I know that he's brought it up a number of times, so thank you.

As I've stated a number of times, we're committed to providing a child protection system where children and youth are given the best possible environment to grow and learn. We now have fewer children and youth being placed in group homes or foster care, and more are being placed in permanent homes. We have also listened to the youth, through the Youth Leaving Care group last year, but we also know that these kids need personal relationships which are positive for their development and, in a lot of cases, their grandparents play a role.

That's why, under the Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, we removed barriers to allow children to stay connected with their grandparents while moving towards permanency and adoption. We remain committed to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, it's no secret that our mining sector is facing increasing challenges. Your government's recent changes to the Mining Act that came into effect April 1 have already made life harder for our prospectors and junior minors. By piling on red tape, you've threatened to grind the early exploration activity in Ontario to a halt.

Minister, raising taxes is a surefire way to drive even more jobs out of our province, so my question: Are you planning on increasing mining taxes in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think what's very clear is that we remain very committed to promoting mineral

exploration and development in the province of Ontario, a sector that has grown from \$3 billion to \$5.7 billion to about \$11 billion in the last year. The number of jobs that are created—27,000, plus 55,000 other jobs that are created as a result—is very exciting. We are very committed to working very closely with the mineral sector, with our First Nation community, with the aboriginal communities, leading our way towards the Ring of Fire development.

The fact is, in terms of our Mining Act modernization, this is something that I think we worked on with the co-operation of all three members of the House and all sectors. We are committed to finding a way to find a balance, a balance towards maintaining a positive investment climate in the province of Ontario while at the same time we modernize the act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: That wasn't the question. The question was: Are they raising they mining tax? Minister, you might understand why I am concerned, given your government's track record for increasing taxes and spending. The so-called health tax after your first election and the infamous diamond tax just as the first diamond mine in Ontario was about to start production are prime examples.

Minister, last Thursday a member of your government went on record in finance committee asking for an increase in the mining tax. The member for Scarborough—Agincourt, in response to my question, "So you want to raise the mining tax?", responded, "Absolutely." That's pretty black and white.

Minister, it is clear that increasing the mining tax will hurt mining in Ontario and slow the development of the Ring of Fire that you've been talking about so much. To set the record straight, is it your intention to bury a mining tax hike in the upcoming budget?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Minister of Finance.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question and I also appreciate the concern for us to continue to invest in our mining sector and in the north. We have tremendous potential in the north, which is going to provide a ripple effect throughout all of Ontario, and we are so much in support of doing everything we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will not have hesitation, even at the last question, to name anybody.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex is warned.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Our government has been a strong supporter. We've been advocating for more investments in the north. In fact, it was our efforts that provided all of the incentives to provide more investments into Ontario than any other part of North America when it comes to mining.

We agree that more needs to be done. We've made reviews and we've made assessments and we'll continue

to advocate on behalf of the industry, and will support that industry and that investment because it's going to be beneficial to all of Ontario.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Since cabinet ministers outnumber backbenchers, I think cabinet ministers should be allowed to ask each other questions on that side of the House. I'd like unanimous consent on that, sir, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I suspect that I might be challenged if I don't, because the member has asked for legitimate unanimous consent, even though I'm not enamoured with what he has done. Unanimous consent has been sought to ask members personally, so—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No.

VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sarnia—Lambton on a point of order.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, I'd like to take this moment to introduce some guests of mine who arrived late: Larry Smale, Donna Smale, Lee Slaght, Jim Forbes, Larry O'Neill, Mrs. Maureen O'Neill and David Braet, who are guests here today to support Lisa Thompson's bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today, from Newmarket, Councillors Chris Emanuel and Jane Twinney; and Carol Cologna, Anne Leroux, Lureen Locke and Andre Sadono. Please help me welcome them.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Ontario Legislative Assembly Robert and Sylvia McNutt, representing Parkinson Society Ontario, who are here for a member's statement I will make shortly. Please welcome them.

Mr. Frank Klees: A special welcome to Ms. Lois Mac Donnell, who is representing the Glenway Preservation Association here today. Please help me welcome Lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

Further introductions? The member from Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I don't know if she has come into the gallery yet, but Zita Devan from Lindsay, who participates in many community boards and organizations—and I'm not sure exactly why she's here today, but we welcome her to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you very much. Welcome.

I forgot Haliburton, but that's still part of your riding, so Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. My apologies.

The member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome here today, from my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, Mr. and Mrs. Larry and Donna Smale, Lee Slaght, Jim Forbes and David Braet, and the mayor of Enniskillen township, Kevin Marriott, who join us for Bill 39 today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to bring attention to the fact that in addition to the numerous petitions I have submitted, and most recently my question to Premier Kathleen Wynne in the House on March 7, I have still not seen any action from the Premier or her government concerning the dangerous proposal to build eight 500-foot-tall wind turbines on a flight path of the Collingwood Regional Airport and another airport in Clearview township.

On March 7, the Minister of Energy responded that the Premier would honour the commitment she made and do something, yet I've heard nothing. Meanwhile, up'd Canada is moving full speed ahead with their application to construct turbines beside the Collingwood airport and elsewhere in the township, fully ignoring the vast concerns expressed by citizens over safety and the economic impact to our community. I demand that the Premier follow through with what she said when she visited my riding during her leadership campaign and stop this dangerous proposal from going ahead.

The Green Energy Act is costing Ontario taxpayers billions of dollars, and it does absolutely nothing to benefit the environment or jobs. This afternoon, my colleague from Huron-Bruce, Lisa Thompson, will be debating Bill 39, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, that will ensure that these projects are only built in communities where they are welcomed and wanted and at prices ratepayers can afford. I hope the Premier will be listening to the important debate this afternoon.

I congratulate Lisa Thompson for bringing this important piece of legislation forward, and I encourage all members to please support Bill 39.

MOOSE TAGS

Mr. John Vanthof: Today is the first day of the Ontario big game draw process. The fall moose hunt is a long-standing tradition in the north, a proud part of our heritage, and as a result, the moose tag lottery is one of the most hotly debated issues at local coffee shops.

When the news broke last year that the Liberal government had outsourced the processing of hunting and fishing licences to a company in Tennessee, hunters

across the province were shocked—rightfully so. It goes against the basic common-sense principle that Ontario licences should be processed in Ontario by people who live and pay taxes here.

The Minister of Natural Resources has just announced that they have changed the big game draw process. Hunters will no longer be able to apply with a paper application. Not only is the overall access more limited, but there is a design flaw in the electronic application. Payment is not the last step of the process. So hunters can get payment receipts, but they will not be included in the moose tag draw if they don't realize that they have to click another box.

The problem is, the issuance of a receipt of payment is the natural end of an online transaction, so many people could make this mistake. In fact, many have. Because of the way the lottery works, people will be penalized for two years.

I have made the Minister of Natural Resources aware of this problem several times over the last year, but nothing was done to fix the program. So I would advise hunters to be very careful when applications are filled in. Tennessee, we have a problem.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My statement is, "Wind Energy Is a Good Deal for Ontario." In 2009, the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance raised the province of Ontario's energy efficiency report card grade to A plus. It's a remarkable improvement from the C grade the province had received when our government was first elected. This improved grade can be attributed in no small part to our government's sound conservation initiatives. They both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and will save money for my constituents in Ottawa-Orléans and indeed for all Ontarians in the future.

That's why, when the critical yet over-simplistic Fraser Institute report on Ontario's Green Energy Act was released last week, the Canadian Wind Energy Association—CanWEA—properly set the record straight. Thanks to Ontario's Green Energy Act, "wind energy has proven that it can deliver major benefits at a minimal cost to ratepayers here in Ontario," said Chris Forrest, CanWEA vice-president.

Allowing the province to move away from harmful coal as a source of electricity, Ontario now has over 2,000 megawatts of wind energy capacity. This means that the province has the capacity to drive \$5 billion in investments, creating 21,000 person-years of employment and providing enough clean energy to power over 600,000 homes.

Ontarians have seen how renewable energy has helped clean Ontario's electrical system and create jobs. In just three years, the Green Energy Act and FIT program have together created 30,000 jobs province-wide. When it comes to wind energy, our government has it right. Ontario is on the right path to an economically efficient delivery of cleaner electricity.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: Two weeks ago, the Ministry of Energy posted the wpd Canada Sumac Ridge industrial wind project on the environmental registry. Even though for years there has been loud and consistent local opposition to not only this project but all the industrial wind projects in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, across the province, communities like mine have cried out for the government to hear their voices.

The McGuinty-Wynne government has consistently defended these projects as being necessary to protect the environment. They have used this rationale to dismiss legitimate health concerns, reductions in property values, and spiraling energy costs, which have forced many people to give up their homes and driven hundreds of companies and thousands of jobs out of the province. Yet at Sumac Ridge, we have a wind project that would see the construction of two industrial wind turbines directly on the Oak Ridges moraine, one of the most environmentally sensitive areas in Ontario.

I know that the Minister of Energy has kept the Oak Ridges moraine file with him through his many cabinet portfolios. He knows the importance of this area. I would ask him to accept the clear fact that this is not a willing host community. I would ask him to recognize the hypocrisy and risk of permitting the project on the Oak Ridges moraine. I would ask him to do the right thing and deny this project the approval to proceed, and I would ask him to support the member from Huron-Bruce's bill, An Act to provide for control by local municipalities over renewable and affordable energy undertakings, this afternoon.

LONDON DISTRICT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FAIR

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am happy to share with the members of the Legislature the amazing knowledge and hard work and dedication exhibited by students taking part in the London District Science and Technology Fair this year. On Saturday, April 6, and Sunday, April 7, 154 students in grades 4 to 12 across the Thames Valley District School Board participated in the science fair held at Althouse College. Students presented projects on a variety of topics to be judged by local scientific, industry and educational figures from the community, and science projects were available for public viewing for much of the day.

On Sunday, at the awards ceremony, the best projects were selected and the winning students were awarded trips to represent London at the Canada-Wide Science Fair in Lethbridge, Alberta, later this year, as well as additional awards being given for excellence in technology, social science, and imagination. These projects ranged from energy conservation to the use of mustard seed oil as a treatment for malaria.

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Innovation and research such as the type being done by these students greatly benefit both our economy as

well as our community. Many of these students will go on to attend post-secondary education in London, and will graduate in their fields with knowledge and skills they need to further the development of science and research in this city. It is amazing to think that the next Banting or Bell might have been present at the fair this year.

Speaker, if I could bring these students present today to show you their research, I am sure they would be very proud, and we as Londoners are very proud of the efforts they have made in London.

PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Bob Delaney: April is Parkinson's Awareness Month in Canada. Parkinson's is a chronic degenerative neurological disease. More than 40,000 Ontarians and their families live with Parkinson's disease—Speaker, I understand this includes your brother. There is no cure. The average age of onset is 60, but Parkinson's can affect people as young as 30 or 40.

In 2013, the Parkinson Society Ontario is celebrating caregivers this year by making their April awareness theme, "Managing Parkinson's Disease Is a Family Affair." Parkinson's is a disease that families fight together. When a person is diagnosed with Parkinson's, every family member is affected. The Parkinson's community knows that managing the disease does not solely rest with the person living with it. Daily care and quality of life are possible thanks to a cohesive team including doctors, health care professionals and families.

From diagnosis to discovery, the Parkinson Society Ontario is the voice of Ontarians living with Parkinson's, providing education, advocacy and support services for individuals and health care professionals. Every family dealing with Parkinson's relies on all of us in government to be a part of that support team, helping Ontarians live with Parkinson's disease.

Again, I'd like to welcome my guests the McNutts to the assembly to hear this statement.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: What's going on in Prince Edward county really has to stop. The government's Environmental Review Tribunal has been revealed to be a kangaroo court. Government lawyers, rather than standing up for the interests of the community, regularly take the side of the power company. Community concerns have been disregarded or ignored, and recent documents reveal that the Ministry of the Environment believes that the appeals process is little more than a rubber stamp of the developer's proposals.

This is all going on in order to develop a wind power project in what the Environmental Commissioner recognizes to be an internationally significant, important bird area. Internationally, only Spain and Bulgaria allow for such environmentally harmful development, while Great Britain and many other states have put such development

off-limits. The Environmental Commissioner joins Nature Canada, the National Audubon Society, the Sierra Club and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in calling for an end to this project.

The people of the county have had enough: enough of the kangaroo courts, enough of the fancy promises from an intellectually bankrupt government, enough of having their community torn up to install wind turbines that are anything but green, and enough of expensive power whose chief accomplishment is the closure of manufacturing facilities all over this province. I'm firmly behind Lisa Thompson's Bill 39, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and encourage the other parties to follow suit.

CARMELO FIGLIANO

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today to pay honour to Carmelo Figliano, who just passed away at the age of 98. Carmelo worked here at the Legislature as a custodian for over 28 years. As you know too well, Mr. Speaker, and as our Sergeant-at-Arms, Dennis Clark, knows too well, we've got to appreciate the people who work here, the little people who work here and work throughout our province.

Carmelo was a daily fixture on College Street, where he walked every day; in fact, you would see him walking up College to Dufferin—all the way to Woodbridge and back—into his 90s. He was on College with his fedora cap, his little cigar and his corduroy suit, and he was proud to say in Italian, “[*remarks in Italian*]”—he'd never been to a doctor in 98 years. His son Anthony confirmed that basically he'd never been sick, never missed a day of work and worked right up until his 80s.

Filmmaker Frank Nardi mentions that he did get Carmelo to make an appearance in the Jerry Ciccoritti film *The Resurrection of Tony Gitone*, so you'll see him in that film when it comes out. It's a great film.

I think Mr. Figliano represents so many people who sacrificed, worked so hard and loved work. They loved work. They loved working here at Queen's Park and they loved Canada, coming here with nothing and helping to build this country.

I say to Zio Carmelo that he's now walking with Saint Peter.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: This government's Green Energy Act means that Ontario has some of the highest electricity rates in North America.

In my riding of Durham there are at least two unwanted wind turbine projects. For the minister—it's driving jobs out of Ontario and seniors out of their homes.

Provincial efforts to protect or shield these industries through their FIT program subsidies are simply transferring the costs onto the taxpayers in another pocket. I urge members to reduce the damage that this government

has inflicted on Ontario's economy under its expensive Green Energy Act.

Organizations in my riding such as Clarington Wind Concerns in Durham should be commended for giving citizens a voice in wind turbine developments. I fully support citizens like Heather Rutherford, Eugene Stone, Don Katsumi, Gerry Mahoney and Kulpreet Khurana, who understand the importance of a local voice in the decision-making process.

I also thank Michael Patrick, owner and founder of the Bowmanville Foundry, who knows the expense of the Green Energy Act through the global adjustment.

The member from Huron-Bruce will let local municipalities control wind turbine development and its costs.

The tired McGuinty-Wynne government has an opportunity to stand up for citizens who not only face skyrocketing hydro bills but also live next door to industrial wind developments that they don't want.

I want to personally thank Lisa Thompson, MPP for Huron-Bruce, for her stand and her leadership on this important initiative.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STRONGER PROTECTION FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 RENFORÇANT LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR ONTARIEN

Ms. MacCharles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement, la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Mr. Speaker, I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: In the throne speech, our government committed to provide stronger consumer protection for the people of Ontario. I rise with pleasure

in the House today to announce that we are following through on that commitment.

We are introducing the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. This bill addresses four key areas to make Ontario's marketplace fairer and to boost consumer confidence. The bill proposes to curb aggressive, high-pressure door-to-door sales tactics, especially for the sale of water heaters. It will also protect vulnerable indebted consumers against the misleading and abusive practices of some companies that offer debt settlement services, provide stronger safeguards to strengthen the integrity of real estate bidding practices, and give home sellers more power to negotiate flexible, lower-cost arrangements when using real estate professional services.

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Mr. Speaker, I'd like to provide a few details of these reforms and explain how our plan will strengthen and protect consumer rights for all of the people of Ontario.

In terms of door-to-door sales, to curb aggressive door-to-door sales tactics and help homeowners make informed choices, a proposed new rule would, if passed:

- double the existing 10-day cooling-off period to 20 days for water heaters, providing consumers more time to consider their decision;

- ban delivery and installation of water heaters during the new 20-day cooling-off period;

- allow rules requiring companies to confirm sales by making scripted and recorded telephone calls to the customer and that key contract terms are disclosed in clear, easy-to-understand language; and

- provide new customer protections when the rules are not followed, such as requiring the supplier to pay all cancellation fees when the 20-day cooling-off period is not observed.

In terms of debt settlement, we are aware that some companies that provide debt settlement services offer to dramatically reduce a person's debt by negotiating with their creditors, provided the consumer pays a hefty upfront fee. However, for some consumers in financial difficulty, this upfront fee can force them into more debt. And some companies offering debt settlement services include high administrative fees and may not deliver on their promises, while hidden contract clauses often reduce or eliminate the value of the original service offered.

To protect consumers against misleading practices related to some of these services, the bill proposes to prohibit the payment of upfront fees before the services are provided and to limit the amount of the fees charged overall. Both of these limits would be set by regulation. It would also allow debtors to cancel their agreement without reason within a 10-day period after receiving a copy of the agreement, and it would prohibit misleading sales practices and advertising. If companies fail to follow these rules, our new legislation would enable the revocation of their mandatory licences, further protecting consumers from false or misleading claims.

When it comes to real estate reforms, Mr. Speaker, Ontario's real estate professionals are among the very,

very best, and this government has confidence in the effective role of the Real Estate Council of Ontario and the role it plays in regulating this sector.

To maintain that public confidence in real estate transactions, when multiple bids on the same property are involved, this bill would require real estate salespersons and brokers acting on behalf of a buyer to only present an offer that is in writing. Salespersons and brokers would also be prohibited from suggesting or claiming that a written offer exists when one does not exist. The legislation would, if passed, also require brokerages acting for the seller to retain copies of all written offers related to the sale or purchase of the property. Any person who's made a written offer to purchase a particular home may ask the registrar at the Real Estate Council of Ontario to work with the seller's brokerage to determine the actual number of written offers that were received, and to report that number.

As well, a separate amendment would give homebuyers and sellers more power to negotiate lower-cost services by removing the ban in Ontario on charging both fees and commissions. Allowing real estate agents to charge a combination of a percentage and a fixed amount when pricing their services will better serve consumers, and has the potential to unleash innovation and creativity in the sector. This change will make Ontario's real estate marketplace consistent with other provinces in our country while responding to a previous recommendation of the Competition Bureau.

These proposed reforms build on steps our government has already taken to strengthen consumer protection for people in Ontario. For example, our review of Ontario's Condominium Act is well under way, with residents and stakeholders engaged in helping us make the marketplace fairer for all involved. Our engagement process is not only about government listening to owners and stakeholders; it's also about members of the condominium community listening to each other. It's about building consensus among different groups who are setting the direction and shaping the proposed changes to the Condominium Act. And it's working, Speaker.

Earlier this year, our government introduced its plan to look at qualifications for home inspectors to ensure that when people make a final key decision about buying a house, they can do so with full confidence that the information about the state of the house is reliable.

The Ministry of Consumer Services is working hard to help consumers better understand their rights and to help businesses understand their responsibilities. These are the first of a series of strong consumer actions we are taking to make our marketplace safe, fair and one where all people in this province can have the confidence in the purchases and the investments they make.

I am confident that these reforms will give the people of Ontario stronger consumer protection while building consumer confidence in the marketplace. This would ultimately help strengthen the economy of this wonderful province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise today on the proposed legislation to deal with a number of issues in consumer protection, legislation that I believe is well overdue.

Water heaters were in the news in 2012 due to Direct Energy's negative-option billing action, so it's upsetting that what should be a simple and straightforward industry in Ontario is instead being marred by so many issues. We have to maintain the focus on what went wrong, the deliberate deception, hiding of costs and the exploitation of customers' vulnerabilities by certain rotten apples in the door-to-door sales sector. The ministry is doubling the cooling-off period for water heater rentals, which is just one aspect of the ministry's responsibility.

Why not other contracts, such as gym memberships or any of the other future contracts that we see out in the field? If the purpose is to protect the consumer from incurring onerous cancellation fees, the problem is the fees rather than the cooling-off period. In this case, the bill is a treatment and not a cure.

Once a new heater is installed following the 20 days, if the consumer hasn't sorted out matters with the original supplier, they will face some severe penalties. Cancellation charges can run into the hundreds of dollars, and moreover, suppliers are free to charge outrageous amounts for damages, such as scratches on a 10-year-old tank that is only going to be recycled anyway.

Aggressive sales tactics are certainly a concern, but let's remember that consumers are being taken advantage of in more than one way. There are no regulations concerning the many, many complaints concerning the cancellation of these contracts, especially when we've already seen excessive and unreasonable charges being billed to customers, and anti-competitive tank return processes designed to frustrate consumers and competitors.

Let's not forget that the two largest players in the industry are currently under federal investigation by the Competition Bureau for allegedly designing ways to trap their clients into sticking to their existing contracts.

For this bill to be worthy of this House, we need to get to the real problem. The fact of the matter is, you can't legislate away deception or vulnerability. We have many laws against undesirable actions, but that does not mean people have stopped doing them. We need to strengthen the ministry's enforcement tools and ensure consumers have recourse beyond the court system, because often the ones who get into trouble are the ones who can least afford a lawyer.

Debt settlement: The vulnerable Ontarian who needs to tackle his or her debts will sometimes resort to a debt settler. They can either be honest or less so, and there's many a way of knowing. Ideally, the consumer would do his research and read the reviews. Then the consumer would compare the services and be able to pick the most appropriate.

This is not how it happens. Your landlord is calling; your collectors are calling. Your employer is upset that you're getting persistent calls at the office. Your kids are crying, your spouse is grumpy, and you feel pressured and without options.

Well, no settlement is ever painless, and if you've ever had one, then you can kiss your credit rating goodbye. As we wait for this bill to be printed, I hope to see some serious steps in the legislation to ensure that once the consumer has resorted to a settler, he or she can kiss the collectors goodbye in equal measure.

If the bill strengthens the terms of the agreement to settle a debt and bans upfront fees, it will generate an incentive for the settler to genuinely pursue all available avenues for earning his or her commission.

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When we go to real estate, we all know that each house and each seller and each buyer are unique. This applies to brokers and realtors as well. Removing the restrictions regarding fees and commissions will allow brokers to compete more transparently as long as the minister provides for a full disclosure of the total cost of the sale. The sellers and buyers deserve to know exactly what they'll pay the broker under any agreement.

I'm interested in tackling the phantom offers, since this type of sales tactic occurs both in real estate purchases and the rental market as well. From the briefing, I took that the Real Estate Council of Ontario will be able to pursue brokers who falsely claim the existence of numerous offers on the property. If and when this act comes into force, I hope the minister and RECO will enact the necessary regulations, keeping in mind the need for a detailed paper trail.

Although the briefing was scheduled this morning when I could not be there, we look forward to seeing just what is in this bill and look forward to something for the consumers of Ontario.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege and honour to be here today to comment on this bill. This would normally be the responsibility of my colleague the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, as he is the critic, but unfortunately, he was not able to be here at this exact moment to participate in the announcement of this bill and asked me to do so. We look forward to this bill.

Let's start from why this bill is before the House at this point. It's because, last year, there were 3,200 written complaints. People have written in to complain about these vultures at the door, and I call them that. I call them that because that's precisely what they are.

I remember when my own mother, who is now deceased, called me in tears one day because she had signed something at the door. The guy had come to the door selling water heaters. They didn't need a water heater, but they signed anyway because the guy was so persuasive, wouldn't take no for an answer, insisted it had to be done, insisted that the water heater was going to explode, and all these other things that were said at the door.

The reason that they do it, and they target people who are older or want people—and everyone knows they target those communities where there are a lot of older residents. My parents at that time lived in a little town near Bancroft called Cardiff. Cardiff had a number of people who lived there—I think 400 or 500 homes in total—almost all of whom were retired. It was more of a

retirement community, as were many of the old mining communities that were transformed. That was once a uranium mine area. They had been transformed, and the people who went to live there were mostly people of retirement age.

These guys came along frequently, whether they were selling water heaters, whether they were selling natural gas: "Buy the natural gas because it's going to go up so high in price, you're never going to be able to heat your home again." In the last 10 years, that has never happened. It has gone down. They've said the same thing about electricity. They say the same thing about everything they sell at the door.

I'm going to support it, and I think we need to support stuff like this. But what we need to do as a government is to advise people not to open the door to these guys in the first place. There needs to be a whole education program that you don't buy anything at the door. You don't buy it because if you want it, you can get it from a reputable dealer, a reputable store, someplace that has feet on the ground where you can go and you can make the complaint.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And do it in different languages.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, and in different languages.

I'm appreciative of the fact that the government is now intending to double the existing 10-day cooling-off period, but very often people will be confused. People who sign these forms will be confused and won't even understand up until the time either that they get a bill or the water heater guy is about to install something. They won't understand, in some cases, because they don't speak the language. They won't understand because they are old and confused, and their families often are not aware of what has been signed. I think we need to do this whole education process.

In the body of this bill, when this is discussed in committee, we need to talk not only about the time limits but also other avenues that consumers may have, such as if a person is older, infirm or incompetent to actually sign that document, that their families can get out of it, even after the time period is up. We need to start doing those kinds of things and start thinking those kinds of ways, particularly as Ontarians age.

I'm mindful as well of the other things that are being said here: the debt settlement and the real estate reforms. These reforms, too, are long overdue. I think anyone who has ever been caught in a bidding war for a house will let you know how unnerving that is and how you get a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach that you've been had when it's over. The multiple bids that you never see, the other people bidding—it's not like an auction where you can go see other hands go up; this is all done in secret, and it needs to be transparent. People who are spending and making the biggest purchase of their entire lives, people who are spending in reality hundreds of thousands of dollars, sometimes are bidding up more than hundreds of thousands of dollars to get their dream home, need to know that this is all above board.

I know that real estate agents are in favour of this. I know that debt settlement people who are doing the right thing are in favour of this. I know that Ontarians will be in favour of this. But please, let's make it as strong as we can and let's put an education component in here to make sure that people understand that it is not right and that the government of Ontario will protect them when they're being ripped off.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for petitions. The member from Huron—Bruce.

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that very much. I stand here today to read the following petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the people of Wainfleet, Ontario, are requesting changes be made under the Green Energy Act and call for an immediate and complete moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until such time as a corrective action is taken on the 550-metre setback allowance from family homes together with the results of the federal health study to be released in 2014, we request that a two-kilometre setback allowance be implemented in order to protect the health of all Ontarian citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The turbines projected for Wainfleet, Ontario, are much greater in size than the model used to determine the 550-metre setback. This minimal setback allowance of 550 metres under the Green Energy Act is enabling these wind turbines installations to be put in clusters. There is worldwide evidence that wind turbines that are clustered produce even more ill-health effects on people. We therefore assert our notification that changes must be made under the Green Energy Act in order to comply with the legal right of all Canadian citizens to have their health and welfare protected and that new conditions be resubmitted into the Green Energy Act implementing a two-kilometre setback allowance from family homes on all wind turbine installations."

I agree with this particular petition and the thousands of signatures that go with it, and I'll send it to the desk with Bonnie.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a second petition on this very topic, which is really Bill 39.

"Against Clarington wind farm project.

"Four 2.5-megawatt industrial wind turbines proposed by Leader Resources at Port Granby area.

"Whereas the residents who have signed this petition have concerns regarding the direct and indirect impact on

the well-being of inhabitants and the local environment in the vicinity of industrial wind turbines; and

"Whereas there are concerns regarding setbacks, health issues, the impact on the local environment and property values; and

"Whereas the residents who have signed are certainly in favour of renewable energy but are not reassured by the current level of research on the subject; and

"Whereas the wind turbine proposal is within proximity of the Port Granby crown land low-level radioactive waste site, concerns have been raised about the compatibility of these two" environmentally incompatible "projects adjacent to each another;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to call for a moratorium on industrial wind" turbine development "and for the project in Clarington and other such projects to be halted" immediately.

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of Lisa as well as my constituents.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

1340

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask my page Amina to bring it to the Clerk.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to introduce the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their grandparents as requested in Bill 48 put forward by" the member from Niagara Falls—that's me, by the way; and

"Whereas currently, subsection 21(1) of the act provides that a parent of a child or any other person may

apply to a court for certain orders respecting custody of or access to the child. An amendment to that subsection specifies that a grandparent may apply for such an order; and

"Whereas currently subclause 24(2)(a)(i) of the act provides that where a court makes a determination relating to certain applications in respect of custody of or access to a child, the court shall consider, among other things, the love, affection and emotional ties between the child and each person entitled to or claiming custody of or access to the child. An amendment to that subclause specifies that this includes grandparents; and

"Whereas relationships between children and grandparents" are truly a very "special bond that should be maintained;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their grandparents."

I'm extremely proud to sign my name to this petition.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition here signed by hundreds of my constituents and people from across the province. It relates to my private member's bill, the Preserving Existing Communities Act, and reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the town of Newmarket official plan was developed through extensive community consultation and commits the town council to manage growth based on specific principles;

"Whereas section 1.3.3 of the official plan states that growth should occur in a way that not only increases the quality of life for existing residents but also provides a functional environment for the future by protecting and enhancing existing natural features and systems;

"Whereas a key principle set out in section 2.1 of the official plan is a commitment to protect and strengthen existing neighbourhoods;

"Whereas section 3.2.1 states that the objective of the stable residential area policies of the official plan is to sustain and enhance the character and identity of existing residential communities;

"Whereas the town of Newmarket has received an application from Marianneville Development Ltd. that, if approved, would impose an additional 730 housing units into the existing, long-established Glenway community;

"Whereas the Glenway community was not designed to accommodate the water, sewer, traffic and other infrastructure requirements of the proposed development application;

"Whereas the proposed development would not only change the character and identity of the Glenway community, it would have a negative impact on quality of life, would erode property values and would threaten the health and safety of its residents;

"Whereas the Places to Grow Act, 2005 and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006 provide for a significant portion of new growth to take place through intensification of built-up areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013 ... that amends the Places to Grow Act, 2005 to provide that a decision made by a municipal council is final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board if the following conditions are satisfied:

"The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality's official plan with respect to land that is designated for one or more of the following: stable residential area, and parks and open space.

"The municipal council has passed a resolution stating that the requested official plan ... would not be in the best interests of the municipality" if it is amended.

Speaker, I affix my signature, and as it is my private member's bill that will be debated later, I encourage all members to support it.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of residents of my riding of Essex.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Avastin is approved for use in the treatment of glioblastoma by Health Canada; and

"Whereas Avastin is currently covered for this treatment by the provincial governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia; and

"Whereas in a clinical study Mr. Kevin Graham had a positive response to this medication and his tumour stopped growing; and

"Whereas Mr. Graham and other glioblastoma patients have not had positive responses to other chemotherapy drugs currently covered by the government of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We respectfully request that Cancer Care Ontario be directed to reassess the importance of funding Avastin for brain cancer patients in Ontario to ensure equal access for Ontarians to the benefits of this treatment."

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to sign this petition, and I wish Mr. Graham and his family all the best and strength as he goes about his treatment.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition that's intended for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from supporters of Guelph Wellington Community Living, and it's on behalf of those with developmental disabilities and the employees and agencies that provide support.

"With sector funding frozen at 2009 levels, many developmental service agencies provided zero per cent wage increases for 2010 and 2011. The provincial government is demanding we take an additional two

years of wage freezes and the workers cannot afford to do this. A large number of workers were already forced to take second jobs before the wage freeze, and with the increased cost of living, they are no longer able to make ends meet. Waiting lists continue to grow at an alarming rate. There has been little expansion funding available, while the education sector has maintained annual base budget increases despite declining enrolment.

"We, the undersigned, are asking the Legislature to make developmental services funding a priority."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that you send a page with a good back. This one has 5,520 signatures on it, and it comes from the county of Prince Edward.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the grievance of citizens of Prince Edward county is that our hospital is being moved toward extinction and here, following our history, we outline our request:

"Whereas prior to the forced amalgamation in 1998 of the formerly named Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital, Picton, Ontario, the records show that the hospital was a financially responsible, full-service, 42-bed facility funded and built by county residents, service groups and practitioners;

"Whereas the Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital had for many years been developing an integrated primary health care network based on the partnership model with the consumer as its focus firstly on palliative and long-term care;

"Whereas the Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital board of governors offered to adopt a partnership model at the regional level, a continuance of voluntary co-operation without increased administrative costs and a larger, more expansive bureaucracy which was deemed to result if the county hospital was forced to amalgamate with Quinte Healthcare Corp.;

"Whereas since the 1998 forced amalgamation of the Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital with Belleville General hospital, Trenton Memorial Hospital and Bancroft community hospital into an organization named Quinte Healthcare, there has been a steady and severe erosion of Prince Edward county hospital medical services, equipment and number of funded beds and community-raised funds;

"Whereas we have moved from a well-equipped community hospital with emergency services able to provide a range of medical services, including obstetrics, backed by an impressive contingent of superior medical staff, technicians, nurses and management. We serve an important rural, urban and huge tourist population;

"Whereas very important also is the historic referral pattern from Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital to the Academic Health Science Centre in Kingston.

Established partnerships with the Kingston health care services were made long ago;

"Whereas now, 15 years later, we're living with the realities of the programs outlined above, to the detriment of health and well-being of our citizens. This diminishing process has reduced our thriving hospital to a minimal clinic centre. This raises the spectre of probable elimination altogether. Thus, one of our most important centres of voluntary activity and economic benefit would also be lost to the county;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"For the safety and best interests of the citizens of Prince Edward county, we ask for an early meeting with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Deb Matthews, her deputies as appropriate, MLA Todd Smith and the medical, elected and lay members of the county of Prince Edward. Our request for a meeting with the minister is to highlight the major changes in the past 15 years and to address the re-establishment of the county hospital as a not-for-profit corporation under the governance of an elected board."

I'm pleased to present this to the table this afternoon.

1350

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the people of the northeast, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government" has made PET scanning "a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with" Health Sciences North, "its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through" Health Science North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of" the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask my good page Theodore to bring it to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents and municipalities across Ontario want the ability to veto and/or plan for industrial wind turbines in their community; and

"Whereas ratepayers in Ontario want all forms of energy generation to be affordable and reliable; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want the feed-in tariff program to be eliminated; and

"Whereas residents of Ontario want to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarp-

ment and the Oak Ridges moraine from the development of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's bill, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and call committee hearings immediately on the bill."

I affix my signature in support.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PRESERVING EXISTING COMMUNITIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À PRÉSERVER LES COLLECTIVITÉS EXISTANTES

Mr. Klees moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Places to Grow Act, 2005 with respect to the finality of certain municipal planning decisions / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur les zones de croissance en ce qui concerne le caractère définitif de certaines décisions prises au niveau municipal en matière d'aménagement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak to this bill. I want to take this opportunity to welcome to the Legislature councillors from the town of Newmarket: Chris Emanuel and Jane Twinney. I thank them for their support. I'd also like to express my appreciation to Councillor Jim Tovey and Councillor Pat Mullin, who attended the press conference with me this morning; also Ms. Lois Mac Donnell, who is here representing the Glenway Preservation Association. I want to thank her for being here with us, and a number of residents from the Glenway community in the town of Newmarket.

In the time that I have, I want to do a couple of things. First, I want to set out very clearly what this bill does; I want to make it very clear what it does not do; and I also want to set into context why I believe this bill is so necessary.

Sometimes, Speaker, we don't get it quite right in this place. When we find that we have passed legislation that has unintended consequences, it is our responsibility as legislators to fix that. That's what I'm attempting to do with this legislation. Where there are unintended consequences is as a result of a very well-intentioned piece of legislation we know as the Places to Grow Act and its companion legislation, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Here is where the problem is: Those pieces of legislation do something very well intentioned, and that is to prevent urban sprawl. As a result of that, we have

provincial legislation that mandates intensification of existing communities. In fact, all municipalities, and specifically the 25 within the greater Toronto and greater Hamilton area, are mandated to meet certain population and intensification targets. Provincial policy requires these municipalities to bring their official plans into conformity with those population and growth targets.

What is happening is that many municipalities have complied. I'm pleased to say that the town of Newmarket was among the first, if not the first, municipality that brought their official plan into compliance with that provincial legislation. So all is well, you would think.

Here is the problem. Because of the wording of the provincial legislation, which actually states that those growth targets are deemed to be the minimum targets, the fallout of that—and, I believe, an unintended consequence of that wording—is that, notwithstanding the fact that we have an official plan in place in the town of Newmarket and notwithstanding the fact that Newmarket is in compliance with those population and intensification targets, we now have a situation where a developer has purchased land in Newmarket—a golf course community—and without conditions, which speaks to the issue I'm addressing here with this proposed amendment.

The developer knew full well that, because of the wording of the provincial legislation, he could simply move in, put forward an application which, by the way, includes the insertion of more than 730 housing units into an existing, established community, without regard to the impact on those residents, the property values and the quality of life, let alone the impact on the infrastructure in place and the ultimate cost to the municipality for playing catch-up with that infrastructure; knew that he could bring forward that application, knowing full well that, in all likelihood, the municipality would say no and immediately trigger—as, by the way, the developer has done just this week—an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board without even hearing back from the municipality as to what the decision would be.

So we have a situation where the municipality is in full compliance, went through the work of establishing an official plan, is meeting all the provincial targets and yet is facing the prospect of an existing, established residential community being totally changed in terms of its character, notwithstanding the effect, as I said, on property values, quality of life and the local municipality. Speaker, I think that is fundamentally wrong.

Look, we have a wonderful province. We look around at the various communities, and why do we have them? We have them because people in the development business have made a substantial investment in land, in the process of bringing that land forward for development and in building communities. I celebrate our development industry. I celebrate our building industry. We are the province we are because of those two industries, the largest employers in our province.

We have a responsibility, as a province, to create an environment within which they can succeed and within which individuals who purchase those homes can enjoy a

quality of life and can count on those communities being preserved, hence the title of my bill: Preserving Existing Communities. Speaker, I don't believe for one minute that the development industry, as a whole, intends to destroy communities. By the way, I've had a lot of calls over this past week from people within that industry, friends—perhaps today former friends; I don't know—but very strongly worded calls largely on the basis of a misunderstanding of what this bill proposes.

I want to make it clear: This bill does not take away the right of appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board in 99.9% of circumstances. It does, however, make it very clear that, where a municipality has conformed with provincial policy, where an official plan is in place that has designated where intensification can take place, where the municipality has determined that the plan that has come forward is not in the best interests of that municipality, where the lands are zoned as stable residential areas and parks and open space, and the decision of the municipality is that the application is not in the best interest of the community, the decision of the municipality will be final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board. I believe that that simply makes good planning sense.

1400

Let me say this: There is a process in place in this province that allows—in fact, mandates—that official plans are to be reviewed every five years, and I would think that at least for that five-year period of time after the municipality has established that official plan, has made all of the infrastructure plans and investments consistent with that plan, we could all count on that plan to be respected.

If a developer wants to come forward and ask for a change or negotiate a change of that official plan, there's a time to do that, and the time to do that is when that plan is opened up. Representations can be made to the municipality, and the decision will be there. What is offensive is when that official plan is not respected and the locally elected councils who have made a decision regarding the character of their community are simply overridden by the Ontario Municipal Board, which, by the way, Speaker, you know and I know are not elected, are not accountable, are appointments by the government with, in many cases, no regard for the character of that local community. Most of them have probably never even seen the community that they're making major decisions about. So I submit to members here, I believe that it's our responsibility to correct what was an unintended consequence of the Places to Grow Act.

Since tabling this legislation a couple of weeks ago, I have had very strong support from municipalities across the province. The city of Mississauga passed a unanimous resolution in support of the bill; I received a call from Mayor Rob Burton from Oakville, saying he would do whatever he can to support this bill, and they, the town of Oakville, passed a unanimous resolution in support of the bill. Chairman Carr, from the region of Halton—I spoke with him a couple of days ago. The

region of Halton passed a unanimous resolution just yesterday endorsing this bill. We have a number of municipalities from across the province who have expressed that kind of support.

No one is attacking the building industry, the development industry. No one is calling into question the intention of anyone. What this bill is simply doing is saying, let's respect the planning process that's in place in this province; let's honour the people who make the single largest investment that they will ever make in their lives, namely their homes, so that when they put that money down and move into that home, they have some sense that they can count on the character of that community to be there in 10 years, in 20 years, in 30 years. If in fact intensification is to take place, surely we would support that that intensification takes place in consultation with the duly elected councils of that municipality, and that at the end of the day, through that planning process, we build strong communities. And so the short title of this bill is Preserving Existing Communities Act.

This is not an issue that we can ignore. If this House does not act, we will continue to allow tension within an industry where there shouldn't be any. I think by fixing this, we will actually be supporting the development industry as it seeks to continue to build strong communities in our province. I would appeal to every member here to support this bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have tremendous sympathy for the intent of the bill and the intent, as articulated by the member for Newmarket–Aurora, in his desire to try to control the powers of the Ontario Municipal Board. Originally I thought I might support it as a way of just getting it to a legislative committee and have people come and speak to it and the positives and negatives of the bill.

But I want to speak to the serious limitations of the bill for a moment, and I want to speak generally about the Ontario Municipal Board. Most people don't know what the Ontario Municipal Board is. It was created in 1906, uniquely in Ontario. No other province in Canada has an Ontario Municipal Board—with such powers. No other power in North America, including America, has the powers that the OMB has, except possibly one state. The powers that the Ontario Municipal Board has to override municipal governments and to override, on many occasions, the decisions made by the planning department are extreme and, in my view, excessive. They have the power to change official plans. They have the power to change zoning bylaws. They have the power to deal and change zoning bylaw amendments. They have the power, in effect, to establish land use planning. They have incredible power that, in my view, they should not have. They are not an elected body, and they are unaccountable.

In my view, for one individual at the OMB or three individuals to make a decision where they can start from scratch—as they say, *de novo* in Latin—where the city

may have done that for a year or two, three, four, five or 10, but this body can re-begin a process from scratch, I believe undermines the work of cities and undermines the work of city planners.

This government attempted in 2006, through Bill 51, to, in their mind, limit the powers of the Ontario Municipal Board. The fact of the matter is that they did very little. Court decisions have said they have but only a limited, deferential kind of respect for municipalities—limited, deferential respect—and all they have to do is simply have regard to whatever a municipality has decided by way of its official plans or land use planning work. That is all they have to do. Having regard to official plans means absolutely nothing, because an adjudicator at the OMB can simply rewrite the whole thing, undo it, amend it, change it in any way he or she wants. Bill 51, passed six or seven years ago, has absolutely given very little to municipalities by way of powers, so we're still at the beginning in terms of what we need to do to change the OMB.

I introduced a bill three weeks ago that would allow the city of Toronto to be free of the OMB, and I wanted to start with the city of Toronto because they have their own act.

Mr. Mike Colle: Free at last.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Indeed. They have a \$10-billion budget and they're bigger than most provinces in Canada. They are a big city, a big economic power in the province of Ontario and the rest of Canada, with a big planning department, and they spend thousands of hours defending their decisions at the OMB, instead of spending those limited hours they've got to talk about how they're going to plan land use in the city of Toronto. It's just simply wrong. They're so demoralized in the city of Toronto, and understaffed, of late, that they are not able to do the double job of minding the business here in the city of Toronto and then having to defend themselves at the OMB. It's absolutely wrong.

It was my attempt to say to some of the disgruntled Liberal members: Look, if you want me to include Mississauga—and I will refer to them in a moment or two—come on in. You can join us, because I actually believe that if a city wants to opt out, they ought to be able to do it. That's the argument I put forth.

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I also argued that it is not inconsistent for the government to continue to change the Ontario Municipal Board, and by that I mean limiting its powers so that they can continue to have respect for the decisions that cities make. They are not inconsistent. My Bill 20 can proceed. Other municipalities can join in, and if the government doesn't want to do that, God bless. Change the OMB and limit their powers so you can respect municipalities. Either of the two can be done in tandem; they are not inconsistent. I'm arguing that we need to change the OMB—absolutely. But they can also respect my bill and respect Toronto. It's all about respect.

The Conservatives love to talk about that as well. That's why a couple of them supported my bill a couple of weeks ago. That was good; thank you.

But the problem I have with the bill that the member from Newmarket–Aurora brings forth is that it is limited in scope. It says that—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I understand, member from Durham. I understand what you're saying.

It says, "The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality's official plan with respect to land that is designated as one or both of the following:

"(i) Stable residential area.

"(ii) Parks and open space."

I think that's okay. But as I read in the Newmarket official plans, they include, in addition to residential areas, urban centres, commercial, business parks, major institutional areas and natural heritage systems that are excluded from this particular bill and that could have—maybe should have—been added, but they're not. So we only are limited to two areas, and that is stable residential area and parks and open space. That is all.

I understand why some of the folks are here, because they want to be able to defend themselves from a potential development where there are golf courses right next to this residential community, and if they build there, that would infringe, I'm assuming, on some of the effect it would have on the surrounding community. I understand that.

The bill says, however, on the next page, that "subsections (2), (3) and (6) apply if the municipality can demonstrate it is achieving the applicable population growth and intensification targets determined under the plan." So, what this bill says is that it has to meet that standard, and if it doesn't, these two items are appealable still to the OMB, which leaves you somewhat vulnerable, assuming that municipalities can establish a process to determine what that growth is and if they are meeting the growth objectives. So you're still subject to an appeal, and everything else is also subject to an appeal.

Things that I mentioned in my debate around Bill 20—in Kitchener–Waterloo, the city and the planners, together over a 10-year period, said, "We don't want urban sprawl." It took them 10 years. The developer said, "We don't like your plan. We like urban sprawl." God bless them. Believe it or not, the OMB ruled in favour of the developer because they liked their plan better than the city's combined with urban planners. I'm assuming you agree with me that something is wrong with that. Not only was Kitchener–Waterloo containing urban sprawl, and not only did the city and urban planners agree, but the OMB overruled them. It's tremendous power that the OMB has to object to, deny, override, overrule a city, and that is fundamentally wrong. Those decisions will still apply. Other decisions, such as if a developer wishes to build a high-rise where the official plan calls for lower heights, would be appealed. Those still proceed. There are a number of other decisions which I do not have time to speak of, but my point is that the bill is limited in its scope in terms of how it attacks the problem of the Ontario Municipal Board and how it doesn't protect the

city from other elements of growth that you will be subjected to in Newmarket.

I know some of the city councillors in Mississauga were here, but the Mississauga resolution seeks to amend legislation such that, "There is no appeal in respect of the official plan policies of a municipality or a planning board, adopted to conform to the growth management population, intensification and employment targets and policies as set out in the provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area and related regulations and provincial policies." That is very different than what is being proposed here. My sense is that Mississauga councillors think that the bill might be doing a little more than they think it ought to be doing, but it doesn't.

So I speak in favour of the sentiment of what you're trying to do, but it is incredibly limited in terms of its scope. It does not attack the powers of the OMB that it should in a way that will reform it so that all communities in Ontario are protected, which is what we need to do. If we give the city of Newmarket the power to be able to say, "No, we're opting out; we don't want to have the OMB override us," that's the kind of powers they would want, and that's what we should be fighting for, because that's the real reform that we need in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Mike Colle: I wish the members that had been here in—I'm trying to remember. Yes, it was 2001. I remember I proposed a bill like this; it was a revolutionary bill. I said, "Let's abolish the NDP"—the NDP? No, "Let's abolish"—

Interjection: Hooray!

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay, agreed? Unanimous consent?

There I was in 2001. I said, "Here's a bill to abolish the Ontario Municipal Board." Did I get any support from the NDP? No. From the Conservatives? Oh, God, it's like abolishing the Vatican. They said, "You can't touch that."

Anyways, I have a bit of history on the OMB and this issue, and I really commend the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing this forward, because it's a real-life issue in many communities, not only in his community, but right across the whole province, because we do have growth issues. I represent an area—if you want to see the OMB at work, drive up to Yonge and Eglinton. You can't even find a piece of grass to walk your dog anymore, because somehow, despite the OMB and despite city council's official plan, it's just basically condominiums everywhere. There's another about 300 already on the go, and city council always says, "Oh, it's not our fault; it's the OMB's fault." Meanwhile, there goes up another building. Then city council says, "Oh, we've got section 37. We like section 37." The member from Thornhill knows about section 37.

What they do is, they use the OMB as this bad guy—not to say they're good, but they say it's the OMB's fault. Meanwhile, the city of Toronto has all this section 37 stuff going on and buildings up everywhere. We've got

more cranes in the sky—you know, the big construction cranes—in Toronto than in all of North America combined.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They're right here. They're in my riding.

Mr. Mike Colle: Come to Eglinton–Lawrence. I think I've got a few more now than you.

Anyways, there are more cranes in the sky than in all of North America, including Mexico City: more in the GTA than all of North America combined. You take New York—forget it; they've got 30 or something. Mexico City's got about 20. Then I talk to developers that come and see me: "Your government's not helping us. Your government's allowing too many appeals, and we can't get our work done. We can't make any money." And I say, "For God's sake, how much money do you guys want before you're happy? How many more condos will make you happy? How many hundreds more cranes do you want before you developers are happy? God love you." We love the developers, we love the people in construction, but for God's sake, stop once and say, "Hey, we're not doing too bad."

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Never—you're never going to hear from developers, "Oh, Ontario's not bad. Toronto's not bad." They're always saying, "We need more. Cut the red tape," as the Tories say all the time. "Cut the red tape and we will build more condos wall to wall."

I just think, in this bill here—getting back to this bill—there's some very fascinating comments made, and they're very valuable, really. There is an issue that has to be dealt with. I just tell my friend from Newmarket, I think what we really need to do here is get the best and the brightest around a small table and look at your issue; look at what the member from Trinity–Spadina has talked about, opting out; look at what I've been saying for the last too many years, and see if we could come up with something that is comprehensive. Because we all know we need the growth, it's just growth that is manageable and sustainable. We need the jobs; we need the services. But we also need appropriate infrastructure.

If you look at Highway 7—the member from Highway 7 isn't here, but God love Highway 7. There are so many wonderful subdivisions, wall-to-wall subdivisions from all the way from Uxbridge to King City and beyond. Anyway, everything's been built up there, yet they've got Highway 7—it's wall-to-wall trucks 24 hours a day. You can't breathe on Highway 7. There's no transit on Highway 7.

God forbid they had a plan and said, "Listen, as you're building all your subdivisions and new developers are making your money, why don't you put a bit of money aside to maybe build a subway underneath Highway 7?" Maybe as all these people were coming to the Highway 7 corridor, they could have built a subway, a kilometre every two years and said, "God, we can breathe and walk on Highway 7," rather than making it a truck thoroughfare.

That's why you need a provincial plan. That's what I'm trying to point out to you, is that you can't have one

municipality opt in and out, because what happens is they play against each other. So the developer will say, "Well, I can't get it in Newmarket. I'm going to Aurora. I can't get it in Aurora; I'll go to Uxbridge." So that's why you need—if you do the opting-out thing, my colleague from Trinity–Spadina, you've got a bit of an issue because they'll play hopscotch. They'll play one municipality against another.

That's why I'm saying we need a comprehensive, real approach to this, where we can manage growth. Because I think we've done a reasonable job, considering the pressures we've had, that there are beautiful communities still—no better place to live than in Aurora, Newmarket, Uxbridge, Snowball Corners, Thornhill. These are beautiful places to live, but we haven't done a very good job of providing the proper services, which I mean are the proper roads, the proper sewers, the proper transit. All these things could have been done better because there could have been money and planning in advance, rather than after the fact, when you know who benefits? It's all the OMB planning lawyers. They make a—I used to call the OMB the annuity plan for planners and lawyers. That was their retirement plan: They just went to the OMB. God, it's the city versus the community, the community versus—so the people who won were the lawyers, the planning lawyers. They call themselves environmental lawyers now, by the way. They don't call themselves development lawyers.

So that's who wins in all this, because there is too much confrontation and litigation. There isn't a real opportunity to have a proper citizen review of the applications—a proper citizen review of the application. Because what happens is, right now, if you do take away the OMB, which as I said you can do it and you should do it, you have to put a proper review panel in place.

If you look at Oregon, they've been doing this for the last 20 years. It works very well there. If you do just straight off abolish the OMB, and if you then just have them go to Divisional Court—wow. The lawyers are going to go, "Oh, this is going to be fantastic if they go to Divisional Court," and they'll be in court and then the big guys will win. The cities will waste all kinds of money fighting in the courts. If you think the OMB is expensive, take these to the courts. If you appeal every decision to our court system, talk about delays.

My time is up. My good friend from Ottawa can talk about Ottawa's planning mistakes in a few minutes. Anyway, thank you for listening.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. I think it's safe to say that in this House there is no member and probably never has been who represents a riding within the urban boundary that hasn't gotten into the fray in some kind of dispute that involved what citizens want versus what the cities they live in want versus what their own planners want versus what developers want.

I think what this bill is informed by is that kind of dispute in my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora's

riding. As I say, we've all experienced it. What we have is a triangle, and I would like to think that triangle puts citizens on the top, and on the bottom two corners you put the cities and their planning departments and the developers.

You know, they're all people who, I think, are well intentioned. Citizens want to live in a community that they thought they bought into at some given point in their lives, making an expenditure that is not even arguably the most significant expenditure of most people's lives, and so they want to preserve its character. Cities want to create places that people want to live in. They want to collect taxes on a regular basis. They want to have nice parkland, keep their roads maintained and provide clean water. And developers, who sometimes are very maligned, as my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora has said, are just people who are in business, and that businesses, relatively speaking, is a decent business. They build places for people to live. They build backyards for kids to run around in. They build parkland, because oftentimes cities where they build demand that they do that, and oftentimes they do it anyway. So our issue here, in dealing with Places to Grow or any other act that pertains to how our municipalities function, really are within our purview to address on the basis that this triangle remains in balance.

My colleague from Newmarket-Aurora has mentioned a lot of the rationale behind Bill 41, which has been prompted by a particular issue he has dealt with in his riding, but one that, as I've said, has been paralleled and will continue to be paralleled in ridings all over this great province. The bill is really about giving some kind of power—I'll just say "some additional power"—within the current provincial guidelines to municipalities. We could really have quite a lengthy discussion of those guidelines, but for today let's be very specific.

The bill sets out three conditions where local municipal plans would trump the Ontario Municipal Board, the OMB: (1) that a municipality has an official plan in accordance with provincial intensification policies; (2) the targets for density, as outlined in the provincial growth plan, are achieved; and (3) the local council has not requested any density redistribution from what has already been allocated.

Local residents know their communities well, but on a different level than a centralized body. That's why my friend from Newmarket-Aurora has people here today; they have a vital interest in what's going on adjacent to the golf course. No MPP has ever escaped the ire of citizens who feel strongly about some aspect of a proposed development, certainly not within the urban boundary. I myself represent two major cities in the province of Ontario, because Thornhill straddles Vaughan and Markham. These are indeed places to grow, and they're growing like Topsy. They are subject to intensification, and that intensification is always being questioned by any element of it, whether it be the citizenry, the planners or certainly the developers. So we're in these disputes on a constant basis.

This bill does not override the OMB, but it does give more autonomy to local communities. That's really what it purports to do and what it should do. It would prevent planning decisions from being a Queen's-Park-and-bureaucracy solution. It contemplates input and local opinion in changing the face of communities.

How our communities will look in the future is a pertinent issue to all of us as our population does continue to grow. Think about it: We're talking about 8.5 million people in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area by about 2025. That's spitting distance from here. That's 12 years away. The GTHA, as it's called, is projected to be among the fastest-growing regions in the province—indeed, in the country. The GTHA's share of Ontario's overall population is projected to rise from 47% right now—actually, in 2011—to 52% by 2036.

Significant growth must be growth within guidelines and must be controlled growth. That's a significant increase that requires comprehensive, long-term planning for the overall livability of a community that takes future growth into account.

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As I represent my constituents from Thornhill, I do know first-hand about a rapidly evolving community. Population projections from the province of Ontario indicate that York region's population will rise to 1.5 million people and the number of jobs will increase to 780,000 by 2031—again, not very far into the future. The city of Vaughan is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in all of Canada. Our community has gone through many changes over the past decade, and it will continue to undergo considerable transformation.

Municipal planning is a very complex issue that encompasses taking every aspect of day-to-day life into account, from roads and infrastructure to transit and parks, from green space to garbage collection. To have a neighbourhood that thrives economically and socially, people need a larger say. Exactly what that looks like differs for each particular community, and with this bill, the OMB could not overrule the official plans and zoning bylaws established by municipalities so long as the municipalities are in compliance with all of the provincial intensification policies. That basically—I hope I've summarized it well—is what my friend wants to do with his bill, and that's why I'm happy to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: And the way we pay for infrastructure and transportation is with development.

I want to make a few comments. I don't have very much time. We're looking at a major review right now of the Places to Grow Act, which is well under way, and we've set this up as if the interests of people who build things and the people who live in those neighbourhoods are inherently at conflict. I was supportive of the member for Trinity-Spadina's bill and continue to work with him and others.

When I meet with residents' groups and when I meet with the home builders, we have conversations, and I

keep on saying to them that I actually was the mayor of a city in a different jurisdiction that had no OMB. It's easy to be opposed to the OMB. What are you going to do if there isn't an OMB? What does that look like? I say, "Go look at Alberta's system, look at Manitoba's system, look at BC's system," and I say to the development community, "Have you had a look at that? Does it make sense to you?"

There are all kinds of better ways to do this, because my residents don't like giving up their Sundays from their gardening and their families to plan strategies to protect their neighbourhoods; and most of the developers and business investors I know really don't like to spend all the money they have to on lawyers and panelists.

I remember when I left my career in civic politics. The headlines in the paper about the day before I left was, "The Cranes are Back," because I was a mayor of a city that hadn't seen any development. It has been freeloading a tax on the development community here that you probably wouldn't do if you didn't have them, because right now, outside the doors of this building and across this region, and unfortunately not yet across enough of Ontario, some of the safest houses, beautiful neighbourhoods and most spectacular architecture is being built by an industry that is one of the most remarkable. We have the most competent construction trades and trade unions.

If you look at the inquiries in Quebec, we have one of the most honest and professional development industries, quite frankly, right now in the world. I have 47 condo towers going up in my constituency, and the quality and beauty of them is really quite extraordinary. If you look at the preservation of the Distillery District, which is being led by the private sector, it is truly remarkable. You see a commitment from developers. Plus they pay section 37 money. Plus they pay park development fees.

Do you know the city of Toronto hasn't finished its official plan? Do you know how much park they've set aside for the city for all of this new tax revenue they're getting? Zero. Do you know how many hundreds of millions of dollars developers have paid in section 37 and park money for a park out there? Kristyn Wong-Tam, my city councillor, and I have had a campaign for three years to get the city to buy a piece of land, set a piece of land aside. God bless, as my friend from Trinity-Spadina says; please, just zone a piece of land for park space. We can't get it.

So what is the problem there? I go out to some of the 905 communities and, quite frankly, we have some challenges with municipalities that aren't doing intensification. There's a little irony here that we have a developer who's actually trying to do intensification and we have politicians on the supposed right who are blocking that. No one likes intensification until they get it.

I remember my friend Anne Johnston running in support of the development of high-rise buildings at Eglinton and Yonge.

Mr. Mike Colle: The towers.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: That's right. She ran in support of them and said, "If you're not going to put big

towers here, where are you going to put them?" And she lost. There's a lesson there. Maybe we need to deal with the political problems here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for recognizing me this afternoon, Speaker. I look forward to the opportunity to speak in favour of the member from Newmarket–Aurora's bill.

We've heard a few words here today: "intensification," "density." We've heard a little bit of talk about the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. What we understand in southern Ontario, Speaker, is that your job here with this greater Golden Horseshoe plan is to restrain growth.

I'm going to take a few minutes to talk about this bill and what it means in northern Ontario, because we have a northern growth plan which is an absolute disaster, I may say, one that doesn't even mention our Ontario Northland. But the whole purpose of a growth plan in the north is to ignite growth. So, while we have a plan in the south that's restraining, we have a plan in the north that we want to see that ignites growth.

I want to read something that the member from Newmarket–Aurora said in the press conference. He asked, "Why is this legislation necessary?" My favourite line was his next one, when he said, "Well, from time to time, we don't quite get it right here." And by "here," of course, he's talking about Queen's Park.

Then he added: "Legislation can have unintended consequences, and when those unintended consequences become evident, we have a responsibility to amend that legislation to ensure the public interest is protected."

Speaker, I wanted to talk to you about this bill, and a similar bill, or a related bill, that was passed, and exactly what the member from Newmarket–Aurora is referring to about not quite getting it right at Queen's Park and unintended consequences when it comes to planning and development in my area, northern Ontario.

I can tell you, as a sitting mayor of the city of North Bay for two terms, about the surprise—the shock—when a planning bill that had passed crossed my desk. At the time, it was called Bill 26.

Ironically, it was named the Strong Communities Act. This bill, designed by men and women in southern Ontario, spilled over into northern Ontario and was anything but a strong communities act. That's why I support what the member from Newmarket–Aurora is saying. We need to have the local municipality be the body that speaks for the north.

Let me tell you what that Strong Communities Act referred to. In southern Ontario, you cannot build on any provincially significant wetland, and I concur with that. I think that's an important environmental and ecological advance.

Now, in northern Ontario, we only have wetland and rock outcroppings. Really, that is what we build on, so our industrial parks are very expensive. They're either built on rock, which means we have a lot of blasting, or

they're built on wetlands, which means we have a lot of filling-in to do, and that's what we do.

In the north, you are allowed to fill in a wetland if you create a new wetland of equal size. That's a rule that we've had in northern Ontario for decades. I can tell you that, as mayor of North Bay, when I sold a piece of property to Home Depot in a wetland area, they filled it in. We built the most spectacular five-acre wetland adjacent to a 100-acre wetland, and we built boardwalks and signage. It's a gorgeous place for families to go. We wouldn't have had the money to do that.

This new Bill 26 came in and said you can no longer fill in a wetland in northern Ontario and build a new park. You must conform to the rules of southern Ontario.

So here we are. We had just finished an industrial park: tens upon tens of millions of dollars, streets paved, hydro lines put in, utility poles put in, telephone put in, high-speed Internet put in, fire hydrants—a beautiful plan that was designed locally, approved locally, met our official plan locally; all of that is zoned locally and ready to go. And this rule that somebody down here in Queen's Park made up—on the Liberal government, I might add—imposed this thinking, this southern Ontario thinking, up at home.

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We had to shut down the industrial park. You can drive through it today; you can just drive through it. It is the most expensive wetland you could possibly have—with high-speed Internet—and now they're building a brand new industrial park up on the airport escarpment in North Bay, on another several hundred acres of land that need to be—tens upon tens of millions of dollars.

So I fully support this local approval, this local respect. I believe our party has respect for local government. We know that who knows best about what to do in your own municipality is the local government that we duly elect there. I thank the member for bringing this important bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Newmarket–Aurora, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for their contribution to this debate. I am somewhat perplexed, I must admit, by some of the things that I've heard. I find it difficult to comprehend the comments that my friend Mr. Marchese made today, because I heard him stand very passionately to speak about how he believes the OMB should be absolutely eliminated in favour of giving authority to the city of Toronto. And yet, he equivocates his ability to support what I'm saying, which is precisely what the honourable member has said, albeit narrow in scope, yes. The bill was intentionally designed to be narrow in scope.

I believe in this place—and we've been talking for years about the need to comprehensively reform the OMB. What I've learned about this place is that's it's better to make incremental changes sometimes, but at least to achieve that incremental change rather than wait

another decade or two decades before anything happens. And so, I find it difficult.

I hear the members opposite talk about their dissatisfaction with the OMB. On Mr. Sousa's website, if anyone cares to go and look there, it talks about the Minister of Finance as a member from Mississauga—great dissatisfaction with the OMB.

Speaker, I'll be very interested to see how the vote goes, and I'm going to make one last appeal to every member here. Take the opportunity. Let's make this incremental step. Let's give local authority where it is needed and deserved.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM
AMENDMENT ACT (RELATIONSHIP
WITH GRANDPARENTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME
DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE (RELATION
AVEC LES GRANDS-PARENTS)

Mr. Craiton moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents / Projet de loi 48, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne la relation entre un enfant et ses grands-parents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Kim Craiton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When you say the word "grandparents," the natural reaction is, it's a beautiful word. There's nothing more special than having grandparents. Grandparents are the lifeblood of grandchildren, so this is what this bill is all about. I'm saying that particularly for the people who are watching it on television, and I know there's a large number of people who are watching it. I know that if I had asked, I could have filled this room with many, many grandparents, but I asked them not to come all the way down here, not to take their time. It's a difficult thing to come all the way into Toronto with the traffic and so on, but I know they're watching. So I want to say to all of them who are watching, thank you.

I do want to recognize two people who are here. I know they're going to be recognized more properly a little later on, but I want to recognize the Alexanders, who are grandparents, who took the time to come up here, so thank you so much.

I need to first, as well, thank my two co-sponsors. It's a unique bill, where we have three members of Parliament who have sponsored this bill. I want to recognize the member from Whitby–Oshawa and the member from Parkdale–High Park. You're not supposed to say their names, so I will not say Christine Elliott or Cheri DiNovo.

Again, I have to recognize the grandparents who have been with me on this journey to get this bill passed to give grandparents rights.

I'm going to talk about the bill. In its simplest form, what it does is it amends the Children's Law Reform Act to allow the formation or the continuation of a personal relationship between a grandparent and their grandchild or grandchildren. I think it's something we just take for granted, that grandparents will always be able to see their grandchildren, like it's a normal thing. Nobody expects that something like that would never happen, but it does.

The bill also sets out to the courts the circumstances that the court should look at when they're looking at maintaining that relationship. Is it in the best interests of the child? And it gives a list of things that they ask the court to look at when they're trying to make a determination that a grandparent has made an application to be allowed to continue with the relationship with their grandchild.

I've been working on this bill for eight years as an MPP, and far too often what I have seen is that when a couple separates or gets a divorce—and that's the real world; it does happen out there. Subsequently, sadly what happens is, the relationship between the grandparent and the grandchild diminishes. Sadly, sometimes it's just because the grandchild or grandchildren are used as a pawn. It's sad to say. As a result of that, there's a discontinuation—if you can imagine that a grandparent is no longer allowed to see their grandchild. It's just a horrible thing.

In my eight years here dealing with this bill, I'm going to tell you that between phone calls, people coming up to my office and emails, I've probably talked to over 5,000 people. It's hard to believe that that's the number, but it is. In fact, I was telling my friends that I've been working on this bill before there was Facebook and Twitter. That's how far back it goes.

It is important that we understand—I don't think I need to say this—what grandparents are. They're more than just relatives; they're the mainstay. They can provide guidance. They can provide the security that children lack sometimes at home, with or without parents. They provide support. Grandparents provide stability. They provide a sense of self to the children, seeking love and understanding. Grandparents are, in fact, the heart and soul of grandchildren.

It's sad to say that more than 75,000 Ontario grandparents are denied access to visiting or seeing their grandchildren. Probably, over 112,000 grandchildren in Ontario suffer from the effects of not being able to have a relationship with their grandparents. This can only damage future generations of our children.

I just want to quickly share with you why and how this bill came about. I can still remember in 2003, shortly after I was elected as an MPP, I had these 12 people—maybe it was 14—show up at my office. They were all grandparents, and they were sitting there talking to me, and they were telling me all their individual stories, like Herb and Marie from Niagara-on-the-Lake. They were telling me that their daughter, unfortunately, had died

from cancer. They had always spent time with their grandchildren. It was just a normal thing to do. The husband was remarried, and there's nothing wrong with that, but the new wife decided that it wasn't appropriate for them to see their grandchildren anymore. They hadn't seen them in five years.

I had another individual whose daughter was murdered, unfortunately, in Niagara Falls. The father decided that he didn't want the children, so they decided, as grandparents, that they wanted to raise the children. When they went into the courts to try to get that process through, it took about two to three years, I think they told me, and spent about \$50,000 to \$60,000. You would think it would be that simple for them to show that they had the wherewithal and the love and the caring to be the ones who wanted to raise the three grandchildren.

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Those are the kinds of stories—I mean, I could probably spend 30 hours telling you all of the stories that I've heard. I would tell you, you'd probably shed a lot of tears when you hear from grandparents who've been denied access to their grandchildren.

The bill exists elsewhere. It exists in the Yukon. It exists in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia, so it's long overdue here in Ontario, and it really is such a simple bill to put through.

The other thing I'm going to mention are a few personal stories, because I think those really touch with you what happens when grandparents can't be a part of a child's life. Some of them are very close; in fact one that I'm going to share with you is from my executive assistant here at Queen's Park. Her name is Michelle, and she gladly gave me permission to share this story, because she's very passionate about this bill.

Michelle was explaining that her sisters grew up in a home where they witnessed and experienced family violence, drug and alcohol addiction, poverty and dysfunction. Their only saving grace was the loving relationship and the influence from their maternal grandmother, whom they called Nanny, a woman of great faith and strength. She was the stronghold, the positive role, that helped them through their rough times. Her Nanny was her shield, her pillar.

Because of the family breakdown, her stepfather would not always allow the children to see their loving grandparents. They were abruptly and randomly denied visitation throughout their childhood. They would write letters, do their best to visit and to keep in touch, and plead with their daughter and her husband to see all the children, only to be promised visits, then denied at the last minute. These days were gruelling. They were all involved, it took years, but finally the pair separated and the maternal grandparents moved in with their daughter and all the children, helping to raise the children and the grandchildren. They contributed by providing support, love and a loving environment. Their grandmother, Nanny, was their role model. She was instrumental in promoting her and her sisters becoming happy and successful women.

Jackie from Trenton—I've talked to her many times—said that the last time she saw her great-grandson was in 2010. This is 2013. Imagine, we're entering 2013 and she's not been able to see her great-grandson since 2010.

Terri-Lynn is a grandparent who took her granddaughter's mother to court just to continue to have access to her grandchildren. That took a year in the courts, and she was granted two hours of access every other week. That seems like it's a bit of a success story; however, her granddaughter's mother packed up and went to Whitehorse and took her granddaughter. She's never seen her since. I could certainly go on and on and give you many other situations.

The bill is just so simple. What it says is that when a grandparent makes an application to the court to have the right for access, to have the right for custody or even, in some cases, for unforeseen reasons, to actually take custody of a child, the bill would give direction to the courts—just direction—because it would have the word “grandparent” in the Children's Law Reform Act, where it doesn't exist right now. There is still a responsibility when a grandparent makes the application to prove that it is always in the best interests of the child. The child will always come first.

The reason I tell you this is because I've actually seen cases where people have used the existing legislation and they've gone to the courts, and the judge has said, “You know, you've presented a good case and you've established that you have a great relationship with your grandchildren, but you're only a grandparent, so in my opinion, I'm not going to grant you access or visitation rights.” It is extremely important that we include that word in there so that the courts have some direction on how important grandparents are to a grandchild's life.

I do want to say to everyone that has supported this bill—and I could give you all the municipalities who have sent in resolutions—the Steelworkers, the CAW workers, Cangrands with Betty Cornelius—the list is endless of all the organizations that have supported this bill since we've tried to have it passed in the last eight years. I want to say thank you to all of them as well.

This is really a great opportunity to move the bill through to second reading. I've had it there before, so I'm excited that it's being heard again for second reading, but I think I'll be more excited when it goes to committee, the committee takes it out for public hearings, and it shows up back here for third reading.

I think for all of us as MPPs—and I know we all care. I know that probably many of us have grandchildren. Can you imagine, as a grandparent, that suddenly you're not going to see your grandchildren again, and you haven't done anything wrong? This bill is pretty special in that it will give you that positive feeling as members of provincial Parliament that it will help the grandparents out there in Ontario who are going through those difficult challenges of having grandchildren ripped away from their lives for no really good reason.

I'm pleased to make those comments and I'm looking forward to hearing from all my colleagues who will be speaking about the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak for a few moments about Bill 48, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents. I really am honoured to co-sponsor this bill once again with the member from Niagara Falls and the member from Parkdale–High Park to address the very important relationship between a child and his or her grandparents.

The member from Niagara Falls indicated that he has been working on this for eight years. This is the fourth or fifth time this has been brought forward. I really do hope that at the end of our debate today we can get a positive response on it, move it into committee and then be able to bring it back for third and final reading. It is very, very important.

Before I start, I would also like to thank the grandparents who are here today and all of the people who are watching this debate. I would especially like to mention Ms. Lynn Porteous from my riding of Whitby–Oshawa, who is here, and of course Mr. and Mrs. Alex and Olga Alexander, who have been here for, I think, all of the debates. I know that we're not supposed to show props here, Mr. Speaker, but I would just like to show the packages that Mr. and Mrs. Alexander have sent to all of the members in this House to express their wish that we support this bill. They have taken a lot of time and effort to make these packages up. They have put their heart and soul into this, so I thank them very much for their advocacy. It means a great deal to all of us. Thank you.

Mr. and Mrs. Alexander already know what members from all three parties know: that the relationship between a child and his or her grandparents is very special, and it's really important in establishing a child's place within a family. It makes them feel supported and secure in a very loving relationship. It has been a special one for thousands of people, but sadly, as the member from Niagara Falls indicated, today in Ontario, nearly 75,000 grandparents have been denied access to their grandchildren.

This, of course, is through no fault of their own. It's in a situation where their children and their partners split up. There are custody and access issues, and the grandparents' rights aren't always considered in the great scheme of things, or don't need to be formally considered. I can say that when I was a practising lawyer before I came to this place, I did a little bit of family law, and I saw all too often that the rights of the grandparents sort of got lost in the shuffle when considering what the best interests of the child were. Really, they're not recognized in any kind of a significant way.

Of course, it's always preferable if people can work out these relationships in an amicable way, but that doesn't always happen. We know that very often these custody and access matters become very acrimonious and end up in court.

What Bill 48 would do is bolster the need for the courts to consider the relationship of the child with his or

her grandparents in determining what are the best interests of the child. That is always going to be the paramount consideration: What is most important for the child, and is that relationship with the grandparents something that needs to be considered and to be ongoing on a regular basis?

It's important to note that the bill does not guarantee that the grandparents will be allowed an extended relationship with their grandchildren, but certainly it is something that needs to be considered as being what is in their best interests. If passed, Bill 48 would maintain the onus on the courts to determine the best interests of the child, taking into consideration all of the other factors that are based on the child's needs.

Members from all three parties have acknowledged that this is the right thing to do, and I would ask for all-party support here, because we don't want to keep passing this on second reading and have it go nowhere. It's really important for so many people across the province of Ontario, for grandparents and for grandchildren, that we actually get this into committee and we hear from all of the people who want to speak to this issue, and that we bring it back here and actually vote on it and put it into action. So, I would ask for all-member support on this very important issue. It means a lot to 75,000-plus people in the province, grandparents and who knows how many children. Thank you.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an absolute pleasure and an honour to be a co-sponsor. Yet again, you heard from the member from Whitby—Oshawa about the number of times we've co-sponsored this bill, the number of times it has come before us and the number of times it has passed second reading only to kind of die on the order paper.

That can't happen because the point—there's one I want to make—is this: This is a grandparents' rights bill, but it's really a children's rights bill as well. It's about the rights of children to have access to their grandparents and to the entire family history, to their culture and sometimes to their language. So it truly is a children's rights bill.

I speak very personally about this because I want to share my story. Were it not for my grandmother I probably wouldn't be standing here today. I want you to picture my grandmother, long since now deceased. She was a very Victorian lady. Her hair actually came right down to the middle of her backside. She braided it and wrapped it around her head—very Victorian. At night, she would brush it out—100 brush strokes. I still remember my grandmother, who was in her 80s at the time. You normally don't think of women in their 80s as beautiful, but as a little girl watching her brush her hair with one blond stroke in it, I remember thinking, "What a beautiful woman."

She also was a very strong woman. She was an artist and a painter. Her maiden name was Patrick. Her married name was Wilson. She always signed her paintings "Wilson-Patrick," because in those days she thought—

and she was probably right—you couldn't sell a painting if it had a woman's name on it. She was an artist. We grew up on Bedford, which sounds chichi, but it wasn't back then. We ran a rooming house on Bedford; she ran it. My grandfather died before I was born. She ran the rooming house. She housed my parents—originally moved back there during the Depression. She looked after her children, all four of them—far-flung, some of them were—and she looked after her grandchildren too. She also looked after half the cultural heart of the city of Toronto.

Rita MacNeil, who recently passed—shout-out to Rita—sang in our house. Glenn Gould played the piano in our house because the Royal Conservatory was just down the street—two blocks—and my brother was a musician. He used to play in a band some of us old people remember called Lighthouse, so he knew many of these cultural icons. They used to come and perform, and my grandmother would hold dinners for them. So there was always an artist or two around our table. We never had less than 10 people at our dinner table, with my grandmother sitting at the head of it carving in the British tradition. That was my grandmother. She would invite them to paint with her if they were artists, to sing for us if they were singers and to play for us if they were musicians.

Also, to complete the picture of my grandmother, who loved to play chess: She always had a little glass of sherry in one hand and a cigarette in the other. There you go. She called them her coffin nails. She was quite the gal.

Here's where her life and this bill intersect, because my parents did not have a happy marriage. My parents had a terrible marriage. When they were together in the house they were always fighting. Sometimes the fights were pretty violent. Now, had I been left alone only with them, I can't imagine what that life would have looked like. But my grandmother was the mitigating force. She was the one that basically sent my parents to their corners. She was the one that looked after me in the midst of it, and when she died I left home—I was 15 at the time—because I couldn't abide living there.

I think of the street children—of which I was one—now. Many of them have left homes because of the dysfunctionality of their mothers and fathers, or a combination thereof, and the lack of any alternative within their families who will look after them, who will give them a safe place to be and to sleep.

I often tell the story—it's a story of hope, I think—that when I first was elected and came here, my office overlooked Queen's Park, where sometimes I would sleep as a 16-year-old, because normally I couch-surfed but sometimes I wasn't lucky, and that's where I would sleep. I could look out that window at where I slept. Had my grandmother lived, that wouldn't have been the case.

Because my grandmother lived, I stand here. Because of her influence, I believe, I'm the person I am—not because of my parents; because of her influence.

I can tell you that that tradition of grandparents does not change. I have many grandparents in my riding who

look after their grandchildren, who have full custody of their grandchildren. If it were not for them, their grandchildren will not be the people that they will one day be. Their grandparents look after them, for a myriad of reasons: sometimes divorce; sometimes mental health and addiction issues, actually. Thank God for the grandparents who are there and who can step in.

As the member said, and I think it's an important caveat in this bill, this is not automatic. I know all grandparents aren't like my grandma. I know there are some bad apples. You have to still make application.

I know one of the concerns about this bill was that this might be a kind of backdoor way, you know, in a divorce, of having the other spouse get—no. You have to make application. As the member from Whitby—Oshawa said so clearly, it's what's in the best interests of the child that the court takes into account, and the court is the mitigating factor here—Family Court. There is an application to be made; it's not automatic. But it's certainly necessary.

Again, the member from Niagara Falls said it clearly: There are many grandparents who have been caught by the lack of this law change—really caught. They don't have access to their grandchildren; they never see their grandchildren. More to the point, again to my initial point, this is a children's rights bill. Their children do not have the right to be with them. That's sad; that's absolutely sad, because they represent our history and our culture, and our history and our culture defines us. Without our history, without that background, who are we, truly? They are part of us.

Certainly, in this era of increasingly small and nuclear families, we have lost, in many ways, the joy of extended families, of many relatives under the same roof and what all of that means. Particularly for women, it means help. It means assistance in raising your children, in helping with them. To have that cut off, that's sad.

I know my own children—my parents had died by the time my children came along, and my in-laws live in Chicago, a very long distance—had not the wonderful experience I had growing up with a grandmother present and there: again, a mitigating factor in my case, an essential, crucial factor. My house became unlivable when she died. It became unlivable. I knew that when I was young—that much, I knew—but I didn't really realize until I'm standing here today, and years before this, of course, that it truly was her that made the difference. It was her that made the difference. How many of us can say that?

Well, the member from Whitby—Oshawa says that 75,000 grandparents have been caught in this: have wanted access and have been caught in trying to get access. That's a lot of families. That's a lot of people. Importantly, most sorely importantly, that's a lot of children. We need this law.

I've heard some encouraging words. I know that every decision in this place is made out of corner offices, that one in particular, and around that cabinet table in particular. So, please, hopefully—we have two cabinet members

in the room right now. I'm hoping that others are listening. I'm hoping that this will get through the cabinet, get through the corner office, and come back as law, because then, finally, families across Ontario can begin to celebrate what is so essential and what should be so obvious.

I started with a picture of my grandmother. I want to end with a picture of my grandmother and dedicate this to her and to you—thank you for coming—and to all the grandparents out there who are watching, listening and I know were participants in writing this bill. I want to say thank you, first of all, and I want to leave you with that image of my grandmother with the hair wrapped around her head, with a little glass of sherry—it was always one, always little—

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Interjection: Every night.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo:—every night, her medicinal sherry—with her coffin nail in her hand. Sometimes she'd put the sherry glass down and pick up the paint brush and paint marvellous portraits, by the way, of which all of our family members now have one at least, and she would hold court. Really, it was like a salon with some of the best and the brightest of Toronto. But truly, the only person she cared most about in that salon and who cared most about her was a little girl named Cheri DiNovo, who sat there and absolutely benefited from her presence and her life.

I thank the member, Kim Craiton, for coming up with the bill. I know he didn't do it alone. I know grandparents were part of this. I thank the member from Whitby—Oshawa for cosponsoring it and, most of all, I thank all the grandparents for all the incredible love they do and I hope, I really do hope, that one day I get to be one too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Well, I'll just say that I am a grandparent of six beautiful grandchildren. They are very entertaining and very much a value added to our lives, to say the least, every minute.

The member from Parkdale—High Park was talking about grandparents, and I'm just trying to think of my grandparents. The sad thing is that my grandparents—we were separated. We were forced, after the war, to leave Italy and came across to Canada for a better life, and we were separated. Half of their children were in Italy and half here. My grandfather was a fisherman. That's what he did. He'd go out and fish every day in his rowboat. Then my grandmother—the only thing I remember about her, she was always worrying. She was a professional worrier. I'd say, "Who are you going to worry about today?" She was worried about her kids. That's all she did, worry about her kids.

The member from Niagara Falls, I think, has really brought forward a bill that is more than another piece of legislation. It really deals with the quality of life in this province and in many families. We're talking about children, and we're talking about grandparents and parents. I think this bill has been here—I go back to

when the Tories were in power. It's since 1995. They tried it; it got blocked then. I don't know where it gets blocked, but it seems to get blocked all the time.

I think that maybe on this bill we, as MPPs, could rise up, be heard and speak to the House bosses who run this place now. Go to your House boss and say, "Listen, we want to help kids and parents and grandparents take care of this problem." It makes eminent sense. Other provinces do it. Other provinces have put this in place. It connects children who are, in many cases, in a very vulnerable state because of some marriage breakup. It's when they need the grandparents most that they can't be there for the kids because of lawyers, courts—I've been in Family Court and seen some very excruciating things in Family Court, I'll tell you. The ones who suffer the most in Family Court—it's seeing what the grandparents go through, when they see families torn apart and they're ripped apart from their grandkids. So we've got to say no to the lawyers and to the know-it-all judges and to the know-it-all House bosses, and say, "Let's support this bill that most of us in here, all of us MPPs, think is a good idea." I can't remember anybody speaking against it in all the years I've been here. Somehow, it gets blocked. Somebody's blocking it, whether it's a Conservative block, a Liberal block, an NDP block, so it really needs us to speak out.

The member from Niagara Falls has been trying his darnedest, hitting his head—I don't know how many times he's done this bill and it just can't go through the perfunctory process of going to committee. We've got to say, "Listen, we want public hearings on this. We want to hear from the parents and grandparents, we want to hear from kids, we want to hear from the experts," and even bring in a few lawyers—not too many lawyers; just one or two lawyers.

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: We'll put a limit on the lawyers that come in; we'll put a cap on the lawyers that come in. And we'll ask the experts, "Why can't we do this as they do in other provinces, especially today when you know the stress that families are under?" Husband and wife—both partners—are working, trying to make ends meet, rushing around, child care. Kids need grandparents more than ever now, and if you've got grandparents who are willing to give support—I've seen so many grandparents give financial support, moral support. They cook, they clean, they even house families in times of trouble; the grandparents are stepping forward.

Right now, there is this bureaucratic block that exists in Ontario, for no good reason, that doesn't allow grandparents to basically help children get through these troubled times. They're doing government a favour. You know, they're the ones, out of their own pockets—some of them would rather help their grandkids than buy food for themselves. They'll buy food for the grandkids and clothe the grandkids.

So here we are. We'll find some way. The lawyers will come and make briefs and so forth, and tell the decision-makers around here, whoever they may be, "Oh, you can't do this bill because we've never done it before;

it's not the thing we do in Ontario." Well, I think it's about time we stood up to the House leaders, stood up for children, grandchildren and grandparents and supported my colleague from Niagara Falls, because we want this done. It's as simple as that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak today on Bill 48, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents. As has been said throughout the Legislature in the fourth or fifth time we've debated this, that relationship is fundamental to our society, and we have a willing group of wonderful grandparents, many of whom are here today, who want to participate, and we need them to participate in their grandchildren's lives. They provide everything: guidance, emotional support, financial support, as the member has just said, and above all, they are the ones who love them and really care about them and want to see them grow up.

The member from Parkdale–High Park told a wonderful story of how important her grandmother was to who she is today. I think we can all relate to that. The member from Niagara Falls has brought this bill forward many times, and the member from Whitby–Oshawa. So you have a trifecta here of all the parties together.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I know. It should go through; we hope it does.

You know, we have grandparents who live healthier and longer lives than they did before, so they are around and want to be involved, and they are in a better position now than at any other time to raise the newest generation.

In the stories that are sad, they sometimes have to be more involved than maybe the parents want them to be involved, but we don't want them frozen out of their grandchild's life for legal reasons. When you hear the statistic of 75,000 grandparents in Ontario who have been denied access to their grandchild, it is almost unbearable to comprehend. You know the tragic stories certainly exist out there, but the grandparents being the key stability during that horrible period when the grandchildren need them most, and the grandparents have a void in their lives also when those grandchildren are taken out of their lives in tragic and heart-wrenching stories. So the bill is worthy of support, because it amends the Children's Law Reform Act to give some consideration to this crucial relationship between children and their grandparents.

Now, when the courts consider the best interests of a child—and I think lawyers have to be part of the solution; the member from Eglinton–Lawrence mightn't agree, but they do have to be a part. That's the way our laws do act. But I think there is a willingness, hopefully, to break down these barriers that exist, because the best interests of the child should always be paramount.

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So recognizing the fact that the bill retains the child's interests as the primary test for any action, it will be the grandparents' responsibility to show that having access is

to the child's benefit. I'm sure most of us would agree that having access to grandparents is, by and large, a huge benefit to the children. In giving grandparents some status in court decisions, which this bill does, it recognizes their special place for enhancing that child's welfare.

I applaud this bill, I give it my full support, and maybe this is the magic number that makes it happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to commend the member for Niagara Falls for not giving up. He's tried many, many times, in collaboration with other members from the other two parties and on his own.

I think the Minister of the Environment has it right: It's the whiz kids who are in charge of this place. The little kids, the young 25-year-olds—that's who's in charge. I remember the Minister of the Environment now, in opposition, saying, "It's the whiz kids who are in control," and no different, and now, as fast as they get in—you've got different whiz kids running the show.

This is about grandparents. This is about kids. This is about the well-being of children and their connection to grandparents, and as the member for Parkdale-High Park talked about, the strong relationship she had with her grandparents and how she—she didn't save her, but she was the sanity in that relationship that we all desperately need, and God bless. Why wouldn't we want that? It's about time, and I hope for the first time in this minority government that we can make this happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to speak in favour again of Bill 48, an act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act, and I'm pleased again to be standing in this House supporting my colleague from Niagara Falls and his co-sponsors from Parkdale-High Park and Whitby-Oshawa.

On December 5, 2012, at 3:54 a.m., Rhea Aurora Jeffrey was born—my granddaughter—all nine pounds, six ounces of her. She was a very big girl, and she was born in Calgary, Alberta, and she's beautiful. She's the most beautiful little girl I think I've ever seen, and I'm pretty sure all grandparents feel that way. Unfortunately, she's in Calgary. I'm trying to get her to Ontario, get her closer. That would be my dream, to have her that close.

So I have a different feeling about this grandparents' bill than I did the first time or the second time I spoke about the bill. You feel kind of different when you become a grandparent, and it's a wonderful gift. So I'm glad to be speaking about this bill. I have spoken in the past in favour, and I'm still supportive of it, because I know how important that stability is for all children. We know that children need strong feelings of self-worth, and we know that those long-term relationships with grandparents are often the reason that a child thrives.

We know that family law issues, particularly as they relate to custody—and certainly the member from Whitby-Oshawa spoke about this. The custody issues of access to children can be particularly difficult. It's no less

so when dealing with the issue of access by grandparents to grandchildren.

It's fortunate that in most cases arrangements related to the custody of and access to children, including access by grandparents, are settled without recourse to litigation in the courts. The cases that do come before the courts, therefore, represent a very small percentage of the overall number of potential family law cases.

Historically, as we've heard, grandparents have no legal rights or access to their grandchildren simply by virtue of their biological relationship. The legislation in all Canadian jurisdictions now makes it possible for grandparents to apply for custody of and access to their grandchildren. There is no jurisdiction in Canada, however, which provides grandparents access as a right, which is usually referred to as a presumptive right of access.

My parents emigrated to Canada when I was three years old, and we left all of our extended family in Ireland and England. I think I've spoken about this before in the House. We didn't have any money, so we really didn't travel back and forth. It certainly wasn't as affordable as it is now, and I didn't have the luxury of a weekly or a monthly Sunday night dinner to talk with my grandparents. Really, even phone calls were pretty expensive at the time. We used to write those little air-mail letters back and forth, and something else we did is we sent audiotapes back and forth. We actually still have those audiotapes in our possession where they were telling me stories and I was telling them stories. I feel sad that I missed that opportunity and I wish that all grandchildren had that opportunity to get to know their grandparents and to have that time.

Certainly I didn't get the chance to get to know my grandparents until I was significantly older; I think I was a teenager by then. Of course by then, I received all that love and attention that grandparents tend to shower on their grandchild and, of course, I was worth it. I was the only grandchild in the family, so I was definitely spoiled in that respect—deservedly so, I might add.

My grandparents were Frank and Rose Gray. They made a big difference in my life. They were very simple individuals. My grandfather was a plumber and my grandmother worked in a children's home. They made my life meaningful and they made me feel like I was important and special, and they were very supportive of my children. They're no longer around, but obviously I now realize how important and how special that role is as a grandparent now that I have a granddaughter, Rhea. She's special, and I think that certainly it's one of the nicest gifts I think one of my children has ever given me. It's a great gift to know that you're a grandparent. I know how valuable that resource is, and I'm certainly feeling some pressure to do a good job as a grandparent. It's important to maintain those ties.

I want to be here to support my colleague from Niagara Falls and my colleagues from Parkdale-High Park and Whitby-Oshawa in their attempts to bring this legislation to a successful conclusion. It's a good piece of legislation. I'm happy to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand and speak in favour of Bill 48, an act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act. I think we all have some great stories about our grandparents and certainly we learn something new every day. I had no idea the member from Parkdale–High Park's brother was a member of Lighthouse. That's an amazing fact that I think is quite interesting. We could certainly use some sunny days this spring. Hopefully that brings good things.

We all think about our own stories and I'm lucky to still have a grandmother, Rose Moore—she watches; hi, Nana. She's amazing. She's been an amazing influence in my life and certainly on all of my cousins as well. My own grandmother—Grandma Jackson, who's no longer with us—had 30 grandchildren, including myself, and she made each one of us feel like we were her favourite. I had a really enriched experience by having access to my grandparents, by being able to have them as a part of my life. Still having my grandmother as a part of my life today makes it that much more rich, not just for me, but for my kids too. I can't imagine having gotten this far without their influence; they've made me part of what I am today.

To rob any child—and I think the member from Parkdale–High Park had it right. This isn't about the grandparents as much as it is about the grandchildren, about the kids, and making sure that they have every opportunity to have success in their lives. If that means, in these cases, making sure that their grandparents have an opportunity to have the same sort of influence I had from my grandparents why should we not give them every opportunity, through this legislation, to succeed that way? There are so many ways children can fall through the cracks in this world. Why wouldn't we give them every opportunity, like this bill suggests, for their families to help them out? I have several friends, some of them are very close to me, who have had their lives affected very much by the actions of their grandparents. In some cases, their lives have been saved by their grandparents.

Before this bill came up—and I'm fairly new to this place, so this is the first time I've seen it—I had no idea that this wasn't the case, that there could be the opportunity taken away from some really good grandparents—75,000 of them, potentially, who don't have access to their grandchildren, therefore, by virtue of that, grandchildren not having access to their grandparents and all the advantages that may bring to them.

I want to thank the member for bringing the bill forward. I certainly will be supporting it, and I think that hopefully the leaders of your party will see fit to see it all the way through. It's very rare in this place where we get an opportunity to all agree on something. It looks like this is something that we all agree on. Why don't we just put any partisanship aside for this one, and for many of these private members' bills, in fact, that we can all agree on? Let's get it through. Let's do the right thing by the children of Ontario and just get it through.

1530

Interjection.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's good for the kids, it's good for our province, it's good for our country. Let's just do it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's a pleasure to—you have an excuse to talk about your grandparents, and my memories of my grandparents are absolutely wonderful.

The only thing about this bill is, it's too bad this bill is even needed in Ontario or, indeed, anywhere. To come between children and their memories of their grandparents is indeed a shame.

I can remember my grandparents—I think the year was about 1948. On Easter Sunday, after church, we'd go back to my grandparents' house for lunch. It was a big lunch; it was a dinner. My grandfather loved the magic of holidays. He loved Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, those kinds of things. As we came into his house on that Easter afternoon, he told us that the Easter Bunny had probably been around the house somewhere. In one corner of the house, there was a barberry plant, about 18 inches high, with little thorns all over it, and every one of those thorns was covered with a gumbdrop. So it was a gumbdrop tree that the Easter Bunny had left—a vivid memory, and only one of many, many memories, of your grandparents.

I'll look forward to supporting this bill. Hopefully, it will go through unanimously.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I have two minutes, right?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Kim Craiton: Then I'm going to use it. Thank you.

I have to say this in all sincerity: I've introduced the bill about five times, and I think the saddest part is that it hasn't gone through, but the best part is listening to the members talk about themselves as people, talk about their personal lives. Sometimes you don't realize—particularly on this bill, when they talk about their grandparents and the challenges that they faced in their lives as they were growing up. In this House it's always controversial, and sometimes we forget that we're just all people who have led very different lives, and how important grandparents are in our lives, but also the challenges that many of us—I listened to some of my colleagues speak about their lives growing up, and it's kind of a warm and fuzzy feeling, because this House is so contentious all the time. I just wanted to put that on the record. That's probably the biggest benefit for all the years I've introduced it: I really got to learn a lot about some of my colleagues because of them speaking on this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You still have two minutes. I don't know why you're sitting down.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I was showing respect for the Speaker. This Speaker, I respect. Wait till David hears this.

Some people wonder why I feel passionate about introducing a bill for grandparents. I've told this story, but it's a great opportunity to say it again to two wonderful people. I was raised through family and children services, so I never knew my parents. Two wonderful people, who were not young people—they were elderly people—took me into their house as foster parents. Their names were Nick and Mary Craitor. I'm not sure what happened, but I never left that home; for whatever reason, I stayed there. So to me, they're my parents. In fact, I legally changed my name to carry their name on, because they had no children. I tell you this because they were not young. When I think of them, they were more like grandparents, although they're my parents. I can't imagine where I would have been in my life if those two very special elderly people—by the time I was 16, they had both passed away—I wouldn't be standing here in this House today; I probably wouldn't have been a provincial member of Parliament. I just can't imagine.

That's why I've been so passionate about the bill: Because, in my own way, I have felt what effect a grandparent can have on a child and how much they can direct them to go in the right direction.

This bill—you're right: I'm frustrated. I'm frustrated it hasn't gone through. It sure seems simple to me. I don't want to be critical of my own government, but come on, guys, wake up. Come on. This bill has got to go through.

Before I close, I do want to thank Minister Gerretsen, the Attorney General. He spoke today and said that he wishes the bill has success tonight. He can't be here, and he's wishing that it goes through for committee and for third reading. I want to put that on the record as well.

Thank you to everyone who spoke. I am extremely touched.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

ENSURING AFFORDABLE ENERGY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 FAVORISANT L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE

Ms. Thompson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to provide for control by local municipalities over renewable and affordable energy undertakings / Projet de loi 39, Loi prévoyant le contrôle des entreprises d'énergie renouvelable et abordable par les municipalités locales.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation. Ms. Thompson.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to stand and debate my first private member's bill as the proud member for the riding of Huron-Bruce. Bill 39, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, is a very, very important piece of legislation that all parties should be embracing, because time and time again, the facts are stacking up. The Auditor Gen-

eral, the Fraser report, Don Drummond, even the medical officer of health from Grey-Bruce—people are stating over and over again in public that this Green Energy Act has failed. I really hope that the government and our third party are listening today, because we have to do better by our people throughout Ontario.

Before I really get started debating this important piece of legislation, I have some thanks that I'd like to share, first of all to my caucus colleagues for their support. Wow. You know what? People across Ontario see what you're doing on their behalf, and let me tell you, it means the world to them, because they frankly have their backs against the wall. They have gotten to the point where they're saying, "Nobody's listening to us anymore," and that is absolutely shameful. But every step of the way, I have been part of a team that gets it, that takes time to listen and understand and consult, and as a result, we're trying to make a difference and ensure that we have affordable energy in Ontario that ultimately will sustain jobs, because at the end of the day, that's what this is really all about: reliable, affordable energy hosted by willing communities.

To that end, in terms of willing communities, or more specifically those communities that are not willing, I was absolutely over the moon today—not like a member across the House, but I was over the moon, thrilled with the fact that we had municipal leaders willing to come forward and drive to Queen's Park today to stand up and have their voices heard.

To Kevin Marriott, mayor of Enniskillen: Thank you so much. Your words were absolutely spot on, and they struck a chord with the media.

To Robert Quaiff, councillor from North Marysburgh: Thank you for coming back for a second day in a row. Your community must be very proud of you. You stand up for what matters. Because of that, you've made a trek to Queen's Park two days in a row, and I really, really thank you for that.

To a local mayor of mine from Huron-Bruce, Larry Kraemer, mayor of Kincardine: Thank you very much. I can't tell you the amount of strife that mayor has had to deal with in his council chamber because of this failed energy scheme called the Green Energy Act.

It's absolutely horrible to listen to people plead to have their voices heard because the placement of turbines is affecting them in a very negative way. And you know what? All the mayors and councillors were very, very eloquent today in stating their cause, and I invite people to take a look at the media tomorrow and take a look at the news conference we had at lunch hour, because their messaging needs to be heard across the board.

To the 91 municipalities that have signed resolutions asking for their municipal planning power to be returned, I say thank you and hang on. Tim Hudak and the PC Party is listening, and change is indeed on the way. It will be our priority.

1540

And to the tens of thousands of people who are calling for an immediate moratorium and changes to the Green

Energy Act, I share a heartfelt appreciation for all you are doing at the local level. Please know that Tim Hudak and our PC caucus stand beside you, because guess what, Speaker? They need support. It has been a long haul. It has been a number of years since this Green Energy Act was introduced, stripping so many things from people, and it has just made them tired.

People are tired of hearing the same message from the government and the third party. People are tired of coming to Queen's Park only to be told their opinion doesn't matter. People are tired of hearing that the government listens to communities, but clearly the proof has been in the proverbial pudding when the government only listens to communities that will make a political difference, and that's shameful. What I'm referring to specifically is the cancellation of the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, and interestingly enough, the changes to the approach in Windsor, Kingston and the Scarborough Bluffs with regard to specifically wind energy. It's not right. What's good for one has to be good for another. We don't have a government that's demonstrating that right now, and things have to change.

So to that end, I repeat myself again. To the ladies and gentlemen who are working so hard to try and make a difference and stand up for their communities, for their betterment, I say hang on; Tim Hudak and our PC caucus, we continue to listen, and we're working hard. And if you take a look at our discussion papers, Respect for Rural Ontario, and our energy paper as well, you will see we'll be taking very exact steps to right this wrong that's known as the Green Energy Act.

When I think about the people who are working so hard at the grassroots level to make sure the municipalities and the communities that they know and love stay intact, I don't blame them. I can't help but worry about them because they are tired. These are people who work day and night to stand up for their homes, their health, their friends, their neighbours, their families and their communities. Unfortunately, in return, they are not receiving a government that stands up for them. In fact, this government is doing nothing but stomp them down, and it has got to stop. Quite frankly, it's shameful.

I am proud to be a member of a party that supports the hard-working folks around Ontario who need a break. I say "hard-working" people because some of the most common calls that my constituency offices in Kincardine and Blyth receive are from worried constituents about their energy and utility bills. They're afraid that they can't carry on, especially through the winter months.

We're so fortunate to have agencies that are available to help out these people who find it hard to pay their utility fees, but guess what? Those agencies are running out of money faster and faster every year. That's a worry, and it's a sign. People aren't donating like they once did, and why is that? It's because they're having fewer and fewer dollars left in their pockets, and something has to change. That's why it's important that we tune into the messaging that we're receiving from the Auditor General, from Don Drummond and from the Fraser report.

I'd like to share a couple of quick facts. The realities are, ladies and gentlemen, that prices are up, demand is down, and we have a surplus power situation in Ontario. This has to be addressed. Nobody's doing it right now, and that's why Bill 39, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, is so, so important.

We know we need renewable energy as part of our energy mix going forward, but we need to do it in a way that is respectful to communities and makes economic sense. To those of you watching on TV, I share with you, please don't get caught up in the spin. Just because the opposition party does not agree with the Green Energy Act, don't let people make you think that we do not believe that green energy has a place in our overall energy mix. Please, ladies and gentlemen, know that we have a place for renewables, but again, it needs to be hosted by willing communities, it needs to be reliable, and it has to be affordable.

Plain and simple, though, when we talk about economics, the FIT program is unaffordable, and I'm not the first person to tell you this. I referenced Don Drummond. I referenced the Auditor General, as well as the Fraser report. Just last week, we heard again that the planned expansion of wind energy under the GEA is not cost-efficient, and it will, if pursued, raise the cost of provincial energy to households another 40% to 60%. People can't afford that, and we need to start listening.

I worry about what people are saying. When we talk to people out of the government and talk to people in the third party, it's an interesting go, and I need to share some things with you, because I encourage all members in this House to stand by the people of Ontario. Don't say one thing at home and another here at Queen's Park.

I want to quote the leader of the third party, from May 14, 2012. She said, "Ontario's electricity bills are some of the highest in Canada, and over the next decade the government says they plan to spend billions and billions on new electricity supply. In estimates committee ... the Minister of Energy couldn't even tell members of the committee how much he planned to spend. For families who are already paying unknown costs for cancelled power plants in Mississauga and Oakville, this is getting pretty darned scary." But you know what? She has an opportunity today to stand up for those people by supporting Bill 39.

Another quote comes to mind from the third party. I have an email that the member from Essex sent to a constituent, and I'm going to read it to you. In this email, the member from Essex said, "We believe that the approach the provincial government has taken in implementing its renewable energy program has a number of flaws. We are concerned that people who are negatively affected by nearby ... turbines are not getting the supports they need. Part of the problem is that the government has dragged its feet in the development of noise measurement protocols, so it's difficult to assess exposures experienced by concerned residents. We believe we need to review and strengthen supports for people who may be negatively affected by wind turbines."

Mr. Rob Leone: Whoa. Who said that?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The member from Essex said that. It will be very interesting to see today if this member, as well as his entire caucus, is going to be saying one thing at home and another here at Queen's Park yet again today.

To the third party, and specifically to the member from Essex, if you truly believe that the government has taken the wrong approach and that people are negatively affected by wind turbines, I see no reason why you will not support this bill when it goes to vote today. Let's work together in committee and get an affordable, reliable energy plan together.

Do you know, the NDP aren't the only ones carrying on doublespeak here? The new Premier herself is very much like the old Premier: She likes to say one thing in local regional media outlets, but at Queen's Park, quite frankly, it's very opposite. In Belleville, the Premier said, "I've had many conversations with folks who are concerned about the placement of wind turbines ... about community input, and so am I. I think we need a better process...." Well, Premier, Bill 39 is a good bill. It's about good policy. Here is your chance, Premier, to direct your government to engage in good policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you—

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: Unanimous consent for more time?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. I just want to say to the audience with us today that you're welcome to be here and observe, but participating in the debate by cheering or clapping is not allowed. I'd just remind you of that.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member who's arguing with me knows better.

Further debate? The member for Davenport. Sorry; Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the clarification.

To the surprise of no one in this House, I rise to oppose this bill. This bill would block serious action on climate change in Ontario. This bill will lock us out—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask members on my left, close to me—there was due respect to your speaker throughout the entire speech, so I would ask you to give the same respect to the other speakers during this debate and keep some order in the House.

The member for Toronto–Danforth.

1550

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This bill will lock us out of a huge and growing manufacturing sector and, frankly, this bill would lock us into—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oxford, if you're going to heckle, you have to go to your own seat.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, all of that is obvious to anyone who reads that bill, but I want to speak to some other matters with regard to this bill. I think everyone in this House will recognize that we have a mess in the electricity system in Ontario. The Conservatives started all this with privatization of the electricity system, and the Liberals have continued that. Private profits in the electricity system currently account for about 10% of the price of electricity that people are paying for. People feel that pain in their pockets every day. This bill ignores that; one of the biggest sources of increased costs for electricity ignored.

Subsidies to private power, nuclear and gas plants have a huge impact on our hydro bills. The Environmental Commissioner, an officer of this Legislature, said that 70% of the global allocation—those subsidies—goes to nuclear and to gas; 5% goes to wind and solar. I say to the member, you're ignoring the 70% and going after the 5%.

The Conservatives claim to care about the cost of electricity but bring forward a bill that doesn't address the big costs or the big issues. This bill will make the mess worse in Ontario. It fails in so many ways. Let's start with the section that says that no person shall install or operate a windmill "unless the installation or operation is authorized by a bylaw of the municipality." Speaker, put yourself in the place of a municipal councillor or mayor from rural Ontario. If this law passes, then they are in a situation where they have people coming to them saying, "Pass a bylaw to defend our income, because we signed contracts." Others, who oppose wind, will come to them and say, "Pass a bylaw and you've got a fight on your hands." Suddenly, what the Conservatives have done is download this controversy to every municipal council in this province.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order, please.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Note as well that this would launch 1,000 lawsuits. Every municipality that didn't pass a bylaw would get sued, and every one that did pass a bylaw would get sued. This is a fabulous employment program for the legal profession; not so much for the people of Ontario who want to work in manufacturing.

What the Conservatives have done is said, "Okay, here's a hot potato. Local municipal councillor, local reeve, it's all yours. Good luck. God bless," as my colleague Mr. Marchese would say. Did anyone in the Conservative Party proofread this bill? Do you understand what you're putting forward? Apparently not. You're not actually blocking the operation of these windmills; you're making sure that municipalities get to deal with it.

Have you calculated the damages on this? Every week in this Legislature we have hearings in the justice committee on the cancellation of the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, and frankly, it's clear that the Liberals didn't make any calculation when they decided

to shut down those two gas plants. The Conservatives have made no calculation with this bill, but I have to tell you, the legal bills would dwarf anything we've seen so far—anything.

The second matter, given that my time is short, is that this bill would also allow municipalities to cancel or prohibit energy efficiency. So I ask the Tories, what have you got against saving money? When did you decide—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West, come to order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns:—hydro bills. When? When?

Speaker, we do have a mess in Ontario. The Green Energy Act should have been substantially amended along the lines that the NDP proposed when it came forward: more local ownership, public ownership, public facilitation of consultations—a wide range of changes that would have made the bill far more acceptable to Ontario—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Dufferin—Caledon, you're warned.

Mr. Peter Tabuns:—ignored by the Liberals and, frankly, by the Conservative Party.

This bill won't clear up the mess. It will make things worse in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to this bill, Bill 39. Earlier this week—I think it was Sunday—the world's two biggest carbon polluters, the United States and China, signed an agreement to reduce greenhouse gases. This is amazing—China, who have refused to look at this, and of course, they can't breathe their air. They know what they are doing with all their coal. But they signed an agreement. The US and China have about two thirds of the emissions, and they're working together. They know how serious this is for the world. Advancing co-operation and conservation and alternative and renewable energy forms a critical part of their new agreement.

Meanwhile, the Canadian government continues to push dirty coal, denies the severity of climate change and stops progress at the annual climate change conferences. Canada is always winning the fossil awards.

Just like their federal colleagues, when it comes to climate change initiatives, the Ontario PC Party cannot claim any form of leadership in the realm of renewable energy. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, the Tories have done nothing constructive on this issue. In fact, as the member from Huron—Bruce has shown, Bill 39 sets the stage to dismantle the Green Energy Act. Bill 39 would restrict the use of goods, services and technologies designed to promote energy conservation. It would also restrict activities with respect to renewable energy projects, renewable energy sources or renewable energy testing projects. This is all being done under the guise of giving municipalities more control.

Our government has made it clear that it intends to work with municipalities, work with local communities, so that they are involved with planning from the beginning. Our government will give more control to municipalities about dealing with the level of control that particularly rural municipalities would have over solar and wind energy in their communities.

Almost 20 municipalities are currently building projects under Ontario's feed-in tariff program. Through our new FIT rules, we created a new points system which ranks projects according to how many support points they've received from municipal councils, as well as local communities and aboriginal groups. These are strengthened protections for agricultural lands. This gives municipalities more control. Since the FIT program's introduction in 2009, it's been successful at developing wind, water, solar and bio-sourced power. In conjunction with Ontario's clean energy policies, the FIT program has already created more than 31,000 jobs. Ontario now has 2,700 clean-tech firms and employs 65,000 people in the clean-technology sector, generating annual revenues of more than \$8 billion.

As we close our coal-fired plants in—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My point of order, Speaker: Is there a requirement to tell the truth when a member is speaking?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member knows well that that's not a point of order.

The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker.

As we close our coal-fired plants in 2013, carbon in our atmosphere will rise above 400 parts per million. The acknowledged limit to maintain global warming to reasonable levels was 350 parts per million, a point which we exceeded about 25 years ago.

Obama and the US government have signed this deal with China at a time when they are putting pressures on our Canadian government to clean up our act or they will not approve the Keystone project.

The Canadian government continues to deny climate change as our emissions increase. It is strange that they used Ontario's record on closing coal to show how green we were to the Washington people.

Our provincial Conservatives wish to move backwards by cancelling green energy and really cancelling the Green Energy Act. Is this any different than their private member's bill about the spray-all-you-can pesticides, which was soundly beaten in this House? The ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides has reduced toxics in urban streams by 80% and protects our children. That's what this is about.

1600

European leaders and Obama have said dealing with climate change cannot take second place—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order. The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, the MPP from the Liberals isn't even speaking to the bill. I think members have to speak to the actual bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: European leaders and Obama have said that dealing with climate change cannot take second place to economic matters. We cannot justify doing nothing, as—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order. The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, the member from Ottawa—Orléans clearly is not speaking to Bill 39, which was introduced today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I believe he is, and I've ruled already.

The member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: We cannot justify doing nothing, as Peter Kent has said, because if we do nothing, 50 other countries—we're only 2%—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Oxford, if I have to warn you one more time—

Mr. Phil McNeely: Doing nothing by 50 countries means we will do nothing at all in this world, so we have to do our share.

Green energy costs are higher than hydrocarbon because we do not pay a price to dump the carbon in our atmosphere. Hydrocarbons may be lower-cost than wind, but only because the cost of dumping of carbon in our atmosphere is not included. This bill, by disregarding the terrible costs of climate change, does not recognize this fact.

Right now, there are literally thousands of Ontarians participating in the province's groundbreaking clean energy economy. Communities across this province, from Chatham-Kent to Frontenac Islands, to Prescott-Russell to the north—hundreds of millions of dollars in direct benefits from wind energy projects.

Students in new renewable energy programs at Fanshawe College, St. Clair College and St. Lawrence College are currently graduating to 100% employment in a homegrown industry. By continuing to incorrectly identify wind energy as a source of rising electricity costs in Ontario and advocate for an end to wind energy development, the PC Party threatens to pull the plug on new manufacturing, investment and jobs at a time when the province badly needs all three.

The Global Wind Energy Council released its annual market update. We're going to have, globally, a 19% increase in energy projects—many reasons that we should be strengthening the Green Energy Act and having more wind power.

Unfortunately, I'm out of time; I'd better leave some for Bob.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to speak to Bill 39. I didn't realize this was your first private member's bill.

This member from Huron—Bruce, from the moment she was nominated, spoke out against the problems that were in the Green Energy Act. During question period, she has raised issues. During debate, she always brings it back to green energy and how it's impacting her community, and quite frankly, I think that's why she is doing such an excellent job representing Huron—Bruce. Well done.

This is a very important piece of legislation. If enacted, Bill 39 would fix a lot of the problems that we, and you, under the Liberal government, created when they passed the Green Energy Act.

In 2009, the Liberal government implemented the Green Energy Act with very little planning and, quite frankly, even less foresight. From the very beginning, the public and the PC caucus raised a number of serious concerns with the legislation, all of which were ignored by the Liberal government.

Now, over four years after the Green Energy Act was debated in this very chamber, many of these concerns have become a reality and need to be addressed. That is why I am proud to stand in support of the member for Huron—Bruce's Bill 39, because I believe it will go a long way towards cleaning up some of the mess the Liberal government has created.

The fact is, it's regrettable that we are even debating Bill 39 today, because many of the problems that it addresses could have been avoided in the first place if you had listened. For example, consider the central issue of municipal planning rights. Bill 39 rightfully restores full planning power for green energy projects back to municipalities, where it should have stayed all along. Municipalities across Ontario have protested the undemocratic seizure of their planning rights by the Liberal government in 2009.

This was something I personally spoke to four years ago, when the Green Energy Act was debated, with my own private member's bill in 2010 that called for restoring municipal planning rights. It's all there in Hansard if you want to read it—March 2, 2009, when I stood in this chamber and voiced the concerns of Dufferin—Caledon residents: "The municipalities in Dufferin-Caledon, like Mulmur, Caledon, East Garafraxa and Amaranth, have all done very detailed planning and community engagement where they have" spoken to their community and gotten the feedback they needed about how they wanted their community to grow and what they wanted in their community. They're saying, "Let's incorporate it into what our community is and what our community stands for." The Green Energy Act took that away from them. Unfortunately, as I pointed out, four years ago the Green Energy Act totally removed that ability from our municipalities.

This ties into another major issue with Bill 39, which is the health concerns that surround industrial wind turbines' proximity to residential homes. Again, I raised that issue with setbacks and possible adverse health effects in debate four years ago. On the issue of setbacks,

I pointed out in 2009 that a German company specializing in renewable industries argued that buildings, particularly housing, should not be nearer than two kilometres to the wind farm. Did you listen? No. The Liberal government proceeded with a very inadequate 550-metre setback. In essence, these problems were all well known to the Liberal government in 2009 and have been known to them for four years. They've done nothing about it. That's why it's essential that we get Bill 39 passed in second reading today and get it to committee so that we can return planning rights to the local level, which will allow health concerns to be addressed by municipalities and can launch a unique solution for their unique community.

Bill 39 will also safeguard important natural areas like the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment and cancel the costly feed-in tariff program, which drives up hydro costs to unsustainable levels and makes it harder for Ontario families to afford energy. It is for these reasons and many more that I will be supporting Bill 39.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This is another example where Conservatives make absolutely no sense. Here we go. This particular party has decided to put forward a bill that essentially will replicate what happened with the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville across this province. When you read this particular bill, this bill essentially says that the FIT program could be cancelled, and is very grey and nebulous on when the cancellation date will actually happen. As a result of that, there is a distinct possibility, because of the way the bill is written, because all of this is delegated to regulation through the delegated authorities of the act, to essentially put us in a position where you could have a situation where the government would end up cancelling existing windmills. I've got to admit that there are a number of windmills built that are problematic to some citizens, but to put us in a position of actually having to relieve what happened in Mississauga and Oakville all over the province of Ontario?

If I have learned one thing through the debacle of what this government has done over Mississauga and Oakville, it's that you can't, after you've made a decision, all of a sudden try to cancel the contract in the way that this government did. We have now spent close to \$800 million to \$1.3 billion, depending on whose numbers you talk about, when it comes to the way that this government cancelled Oakville and Mississauga. I would think that the Conservative caucus would have learned something from that experience to say that you draft a bill that doesn't make it possible to cancel contracts that are already in place in order to allow the same type of debacle not to happen just in Mississauga and Oakville, but in communities across this province.

Are there problems with the Green Energy Act? Yes. Are we in support of green energy? Yes. There is a better way of doing it. Our friend and critic, Mr. Tabuns, raised how you can have development of green energy in a way that reflects the needs of being able to develop that energy, in a way that makes sense, both from the eco-

nomic perspective and the perspective of the communities affected. But what this Tory caucus is trying to do is move a bill that would essentially make it possible for governments to be able to cancel existing FIT contracts, let alone cancelling the FIT program itself. All I know—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It should be. It should be cancelled.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There you go. It's admitted. It should be cancelled, and now the Conservative caucus is saying what they're prepared to do is cancel existing FIT contracts. If you do that, you are into one heck of a lawsuit that will cost the taxpayers of this province billions of dollars.

For that fact, there's no way I could support this act, because I agree with the Conservatives that there is a problem when it comes to siting, but I don't agree that we should allow this to happen in such a way that ends up having the taxpayer holding the bill for what could be hundreds of millions of dollars when it comes to the cancellation of existing contracts.

1610

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to congratulate the member for Huron-Bruce on this bill. It shows she is listening to her constituents. That's what I try to do as well.

Back on March 5, I hand-delivered to the Premier a letter and a package from North Perth about the wind farm proposals threatening the community. Our message was clear: We in Perth-Wellington are not willing hosts. We're still waiting for a response.

This bill would ensure that wind turbine projects go exclusively to willing host communities. It would reinstate municipal planning powers for renewable energy projects, something the McGuinty-Wynne government stripped away. It would give municipalities an effective veto over wind turbine projects.

This bill would ensure energy affordability, so that wind power would only be used if it was cost-effective. It would eliminate the costly feed-in tariff program, and it would protect the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine from wind turbines.

These actions are just common sense. Passing this bill is an opportunity to do the right thing after so many years of this government doing the wrong thing. Make no mistake, this government's policy, beginning with the Green Energy Act, has left destruction in its wake. It has left divided communities, unaffordable power, shuttered manufacturing plants, lost jobs and special deals for wind energy companies, all to no environmental benefit.

My constituents know it is nothing short of a scandal. They know the McGuinty-Wynne policy has been a miserable failure. My constituents noticed the government's throne speech, which talked about suddenly wanting to work with municipalities. It talked about respecting local decision-making when it comes to energy projects like wind turbines. They were also pleased that the Premier finally admitted her process for siting wind

turbines could be better. No kidding. We've been telling her that for years.

So here again is another chance for the government to listen to the people, turn back from the failures and arrogant ways of their past and do the right thing. The people are here today watching. So, Premier, I ask you, do the right thing immediately.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to speak to Bill 39. I want to welcome all our guests here. We have different opinions on this issue, but that's why we're here to have a debate.

Of course, New Democrats want to see our province develop an energy plan that is green, that is sustainable and that creates jobs for people in our province. We hear loud and clear that the Liberal government has made mistakes with implementation of the Green Energy Act, but Bill 39 is not the solution to this Liberal government's failure to enact a green energy program in a careful and respectful manner. That's why I will not be supporting Bill 39.

Bill 39 claims it will make energy affordable, create jobs, protect the environment and give municipalities a greater say, but New Democrats know this bill will not achieve these things. People in Ontario should be more concerned about the privatization of our power generation and the continued subsidization of expensive nuclear power. The people of Ontario are paying the price for the disastrous private power deal the Liberal government struck to relocate gas power plants, costing Ontarians hundreds of millions of dollars.

Both Conservatives and Liberals support billion-dollar subsidies for the nuclear industry and support privatization. This government has already committed \$1 billion to Darlington's refurbishment, even though its energy plan has not been approved and the total cost of the project is not yet known. How is this responsible planning? What about conservation? The cheapest, cleanest energy is the energy we save, and we have a Liberal government that has cancelled retrofit programs that would allow Ontarians to save money and save energy.

There's a reason this Liberal government reduces emphasis on conservation and energy efficiency beyond 2020. It's because that's the time refurbished nuclear plants are expected to begin coming online.

Speaker, Bill 39 claims to protect the environment, but wind energy is not the greatest threat to a healthy environment. We know that the Liberal government's decision to keep coal plants open until 2014 instead of shutting them down today will lead to the unnecessary deaths of 1,000 Ontarians, according to the RAO. That's not something we hear Conservatives speaking about.

The biggest threats to the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Peninsula are not wind turbines. They are urban sprawl and development; they are aggregate extraction and new highways.

There is an undeniable need to increase local community and municipal input in renewable energy projects.

Communities need to be given opportunities for meaningful input in the development and siting of projects, and greater opportunities to derive real economic benefits from these projects. Priority should be given to community-based and public energy projects, and we should have strong domestic content requirements so that manufacturing jobs are kept here in Ontario.

The Liberal government has failed to do this. They've failed to be respectful to communities. I urge the government to learn from this bill and find solutions that support our renewable energy sector and work for all of our communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is the latest in a series of Conservative bills aimed at shutting down Ontario's cutting-edge renewable energy industry.

My colleague the MPP from Niagara Falls summed it up for me earlier this afternoon. After Hayes Dana shut down an industrial plant in Thorold South, a new investor, TSP, out of China, bought the facility, invested \$20 million of their own money, asked for no subsidy and has sent locally hired people over to China for training. Back in Ontario, those employees are part of a cutting-edge, 21st-century, high-value, high-wage manufacturing operation.

Anticipating clean energy opportunities, Niagara College graduates pointedly reminded the member for Niagara Falls that they expect him to vote against this bill and for the good jobs that they expect to fill in the coming years.

The best way to grasp what the Tea Party Tories plan to do with energy in the future is to look at what they've done with energy in the past. On their sad, sorry watch in government between 1995 and 2003—eight long, lost years—our air got worse because they cranked up the use of coal by more than double what it was when they took office. Dirty coal cost Ontarians more than \$4 billion each year in health and environmental costs. By the time our government took office in 2003, coal-fired generation amounted to a quarter of Ontario's total. Ten years later, coal use for power generation is down by 90%. Ontario is on track to fully eliminate coal as an electricity source within four years.

So what's this bill about? This bill is about going back to burning dirty coal while chasing out high-value, high-wage jobs and destroying Ontario's market leadership in renewable energy.

Saying no to renewable energy is familiar territory to Tea Party Tories. By 2003, there were exactly 10 wind generation units in all of Ontario. Today, there are more than 1,000, and Ontario's wind generation capacity is about 2,000 megawatts, roughly equal to four Pickering-sized reactors.

This bill is not about helping municipalities. During those eight lost Conservative years, here are some of the costs dumped on your Ontario municipal property tax base by the Conservatives: public health; Ontario Works; disability support; social housing; land ambulance—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound: You're warned.

Mr. Bob Delaney:—drug coverage; roads and highways; court security; and public transit.

This bill is not about low-cost power. During their eight lost PC years, the Conservative government paid up to \$2.83 per kilowatt hour from gas plants—gas plants—while they were selling the power to you at a subsidized 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. That's why you ended up with a \$21-billion stranded debt when Ontarians relieved the Conservatives of their unfortunate burden of power in 2003. That alone should be sufficient reason to vote against this bill, just as this Legislature has turned down three nearly identical Conservative bills on the same subject since 2011.

In Ontario, more than 20 municipalities are currently actively building feed-in tariff, or FIT, projects. That list includes areas represented by Conservative MPPs, such as Brockville, the Kitchener area, Lambton Shores, Waterloo and others. Their MPPs won't speak in favour of good jobs and clean energy in their communities, so I will.

And in case you want a case of irony, consider that the same Tea Party Conservatives that campaigned on cancelling two gas plants, with no idea whatsoever of how to do it, have had their members state clearly that they plan to shut down Ontario's world-class clean energy industry with no idea how to do it.

6620

Consider, for example, these words from the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex on December 19, 2012, at a municipal council. He said that "we realize that when we make the commitment, we're not going to build them.... So scrap the 50,000 projects that are in the queue. We realize that there is going to be a cost, our lawyers have told us that there are opt-out clauses and we sure as hell are going to pay those out...."

The same party that gave us the Highway 407 giveaway, the worst privatization deal in the history of the world, and the same party that spent \$350 million filling in the Eglinton subway now says it's going to spend even more billions of dollars shutting down green energy. This summer rerun of a bill is a flimsy, uncosted campaign promise to spend billions of dollars of Ontario taxpayers' money not to generate power.

Speaker, I'm in favour of jobs, growth, secure electricity and clean energy. Those are all at risk with this rehashed reactionary bill, and that is the reason I'm going to vote against it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: We're hearing a lot today about the financial cost that the Green Energy Act has had on manufacturing here in province in Ontario, and I'll get to that in a moment. But something that was briefly mentioned that I find is a shame, and I think Abe Lincoln said it best, Mr. Speaker. Here is the travesty of it: "No

man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent."

So here we have municipalities that are being dictated to by this government as to they cannot have a say where these wind turbines are going to be established. And that is the travesty of democracy in the state of Ontario today. They should be ashamed of themselves. This government is a travesty—a plague on this province.

I would like to just say, the NDP members are saying how they are for and Liberals are saying they're for manufacturing. Well, I just came yesterday from the manufacturers' association in my riding, and the number one concern from the manufacturers in Northumberland—Quinte West is the cost of electricity, especially if they look at their global adjustment, which fluctuates to pay for this Green Energy Act and the inconsistency of the wind that's blowing, not just across the way here—

Interjection: On the moon.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: On the moon as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's a travesty that democracy has been trampled by this government. The rights of Ontarians have been trampled on.

It's hard when we're sitting over here trying to get some good, good legislation. I want to commend the member from Huron—Bruce for her hard work and dedication in representing the people of her riding with distinction, I might add. So good for you. I want to say that we here in the PC caucus, and Tim Hudak, stand up and listen to Ontarians, and we care about people back home and what it does.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise in the House to support MPP Lisa Thompson's Bill 39. I'd like to also add my congratulations and thanks to the MPP from Huron—Bruce for her hard work on this file.

If passed, this bill would ensure that wind turbines would only be placed in local municipalities that are willing hosts, and municipalities would be given full veto power over wind turbines.

In my riding alone we have thousands of turbine developments installed now or proposed. These include projects like the Adelaide, Bornish, Cedar Point, Grand Bend, Jericho, Napier, White Pines and Zephyr projects. In Kent county alone, there are proposals for over 570 industrial wind turbines, including one of the largest wind turbine developments in the entire world. Clearly, it's time for local control and local decision-making when it comes to the placement and approval of industrial wind turbines.

This bill would also repeal the feed-in tariff program. Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs since this government came to office, and now Ontario has the highest energy costs in all of North America. Clearly, we need change in the province of Ontario.

Rather than acknowledge that there is a problem in the way the government has handled renewables in the past and that the process needs to change, the McGuinty-

Wynne-Horwath government has ignored the problem, and they have ignored the people of Ontario. Unfortunately, this behaviour is typical of this government. They plow legislation through without any consultation. They have forced wind turbines on communities and pitted community against community. The public has raised concerns regarding the impacts of wind turbines, but this government and the third party, the NDP, don't care.

I will continue, as will our caucus, to push for changes to the Liberals' failed Green Energy Act and costly feed-in tariff program and will support, proudly, MPP Lisa Thompson's Bill 39 here this afternoon. I encourage all members in this House to do the right thing: Stand up for Ontario families and support Bill 39.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry, my mistake. Two minutes to the member from Huron-Bruce. My apologies.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much.

You know, I stand today and I acknowledge our members from Toronto-Danforth, Ottawa-Orléans, Timmins-James Bay, Davenport, and Mississauga-Streetsville.

While we understand where you're coming from, I can't help but say to my seatmate and critic of energy that I'm afraid you might have been proven wrong today, because our critic of energy has the science behind him that has said that turbines typically blow at night when we don't need the energy. Well, to the member for Nipissing, I have to say that you were proven wrong today, because there was a lot of wind blowing right here in this chamber. It just doesn't make any sense.

And to my fellow caucus members from Dufferin-Caledon, Perth-Wellington, Northumberland-Quinte West and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, thank you. Thank you for understanding what the Green Energy Act has done across Ontario. It's been an absolute mess. It has caused chaos, it has ripped communities and families apart, and it's unaffordable.

We heard the government and the third party reference manufacturing. I want to share with you an email I received this past week. It reads, "The gas plant cancellation circus came back to the news this week. One report I read had the Ontario taxpayer footing the cost for the cancellation. This can't be accurate, is it? Electricity rates and energy policy are a real sore spot for me. I cringe when our business gets its monthly bill."

That came from Dirk Nielson, VP, manufacturing, Bogdon and Gross Furniture Co. in Walkerton. To Dirk I say: Stand by. Tim Hudak and the PC Party get it. Three per cent of green energy is costing 55% of your total energy bill. It has to stop. That's why we need affordable energy in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PRESERVING EXISTING COMMUNITIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À PRÉSERVER LES COLLECTIVITÉS EXISTANTES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 16, standing in the name of Mr. Klees.

Mr. Klees has moved second reading of Bill 41, An Act to amend the Places to Grow Act, 2005. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Klees.

Mr. Frank Klees: I was so excited, I forgot. I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on General Government.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: There were five standing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I found four.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, the vote was called. You called it on the ayes, and there were five or more members who stood.

Interjections: Four.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Colle was standing as well.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Klees, was it general government?

Mr. Frank Klees: General government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to general government. Agreed? Agreed.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT (RELATIONSHIP WITH GRANDPARENTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE (RELATION AVEC LES GRANDS-PARENTS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Craiton has moved second reading of Bill 48, an Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Craiton.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, or on the other hand, let's just have third reading right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to legislation and private bills.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Regulations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Regulations and private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

ENSURING AFFORDABLE ENERGY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 FAVORISANT L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Thompson has moved second reading of Bill 39, An Act to provide for control by local municipalities over renewable and affordable energy undertakings.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1632 to 1637.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craiton, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Natyshak, Taras
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 33; the nays are 40.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard noes; I heard "yes." I'm not sure.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): On division.

This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m. on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1641.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
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Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

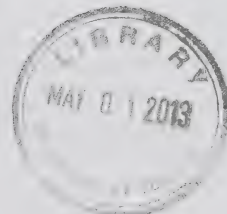
Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 22 April 2013

Lundi 22 avril 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 April 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 avril 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know that my good friends from Kingston, John and Diane Fielding, are here today. They may not have come into the chamber yet, but they're here to watch question period and to have lunch with their MPP.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome the parents of my page Theodore Vaidhyan to the Legislature today. He is acting as a captain, and his parents, Titus and Elizabeth, and sister Tricia are also here today. They're seated in the east gallery. I want to extend them a very warm welcome. I'm very proud of him as well.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'd like to welcome today Jim Facette. He's not quite through security yet, but he's the president and CEO of the Canadian Propane Association. Welcome to see what's happening at Queen's Park today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons acknowledging organ awareness week. Do we have agreement? Agreed? Agreed.

Further introduction of guests?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I'd like to welcome the newest resident of Ontario, who's watching on TV, Benjamin Leone, son of MPP Rob Leone and wife, Kate. The smaller brother of Alex and Aiden was born on Saturday, April 20, weighing in at 8 pounds, 14 ounces. The healthy family is at home; I know they're watching on TV. Welcome Benjamin Leone.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure the member from Leeds–Grenville will not want to hurt his hand.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm excited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can feel that excitement. We're all excited about the birth of a new Ontarian, so we obviously offer our deepest congratulations and healthy wishes to the entire family. I'm sure he's watching.

Clarification from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Are the ribbons available on both sides? Are they now being distributed?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. All ribbons are being distributed on both sides of the galleries.

Further introductions?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce to the Legislature Mr. Rick Ciccarelli from the Labour Education Centre. He's here at Queen's Park this morning to speak about community benefits agreements. I'd like to welcome him in the Legislature.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to welcome all members of Leafs Nation who are observing question period this morning and are looking forward to the member from Nepean–Carleton to acknowledge the fact that the Leafs have made it to the playoffs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not to diminish this opportunity, so the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On behalf of all the eastern Ontario members, with the exception of the man beside me, who is a Leafs fan, I must say we're still praying in eastern Ontario.

To the member for Newmarket–Aurora: Congratulations. I just want you to know, though—to all the Leafs fans—the little stick that you're going to use after May 1 is not a golf club; it's actually a hockey stick, and we've got a little bit of experience in eastern Ontario with the Ottawa Senators playing in the playoffs.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, could you please brief the assembly on the additional costs in your budget from the Liberal government's decision to cancel both the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Members of the opposition are inquiring about something that they said they would do. Members of the opposition are saying, "We'll cancel the power plant." In fact, the Leader of the Opposition was there on a bus, doing a press conference, with a pink elephant, no less, saying, "We are the ones who will stop the power plant. We are the ones who will cancel it." We said we would move it. The member now is suggesting that somehow, what they said they would do, they now say they could not do. We, on this side of the House, said we would—a promise they made that we kept. We've accounted for it, and it is going through as it should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't think I got an answer to a very straightforward question. I think that when you're—I recognize that this is the minister's first budget as finance minister, and as some of my colleagues say, hopefully his last so that we get Ontario back on track in the province. Surely your budget must be close to finality, if not ready to go.

You are aware of the gas plant cancellation costs. After all, you were in on the decision. You were a key component of making that situation, and now you see the actual numbers.

You can play political games, Minister. You can continue the sort of political stonewalling that has become the typical Wynne-McGuinty government approach, or you could just answer a very simple and direct question as finance minister. Your budget's ready to go. Why don't you just please tell us what are the costs that you've assigned for the Liberal decision to cancel both the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have accommodated a price that was established a couple of years back, and it was put forward last year when it was at \$190 million, and the contingencies and so forth going forward have been accommodating for a number of initiatives.

But more importantly, the member opposite is right now suggesting—and he's committed this—he hasn't even read the budget, doesn't even know what it states. We have been on target; we've exceeded our target. Our fiscal controls are working; we are en route to balance the budget. Four years running, we've beat those targets, and more jobs are being created.

The response is, "We don't care what it has been doing. We're not even going to look at it. We're just going to defeat it without even reading it." Now, that's a shame. 1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If there's going to be any assistance from me, I'd like to ask for it first. New question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. The minister uses the term "it's a shame." What's clearly a shame is, the minister, who's preparing a budget, can't even stand in his place and tell us exactly what the costs are going to be to cancel. I mean, let's be very direct here. You've been in on this decision to cancel the gas plants from day one. You are intimately aware of the details of how much this is going to cost taxpayers and increase the fiscal hole in your budget.

If I heard you correctly, Minister, you said that \$190 million has been booked; I was listening closely to your answer. So are you telling us that the hole in your budget is only \$190 million for the cancellation of the gas plants, when the Auditor General himself says it's much more than that? Are you really sticking to that old story that

it's only \$190 million? Or will you come clean and tell us exactly how big of a hole your cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants costs the Ontario taxpayers?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We're moving forward on a very strong, balanced budget, a budget that doesn't put at risk our economic recovery. It's a budget that speaks to the needs of the people of Ontario, and it's not about political games. This is about what's in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

The opposition are obviously gunning for an election. That is not what the people of Ontario want. That is not what we want, on this side of the House. We want to work collaboratively with all members of the House for the best interests of the people of Ontario. This budget is going to speak to them. It's going to be a balanced approach that talks about the way forward to balance, and it's going to initiate even more economic recovery, more economic stimulus, more jobs.

Our restraint measures, as well as our stimulus measures, are working. We've beat targets; we're exceeding results. We're ahead of all other areas of Canada. That's what we should be doing together for the people of Ontario, and that's what we're going to be doing going forward from the next budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, back to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry, Leader. That was the final supplementary. You're now on a new question. Thank you.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Still to the Minister of Finance, who had a bit of a slip: He said it's a "balanced budget." The reality is, with how hard Ontarians are working, with the amount of revenue that's come in, it should be a balanced budget in Ontario. We should be creating jobs. We should be at the top in Canada, not at the back of the pack.

The minister can't answer a very basic question. I know you know the answer, because you were there at the cabinet table when Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne made the decision to cancel the gas plants. You were the finance minister. You were one of the members for whom taxpayers may have paid anywhere from \$650 million to over \$1 billion to save your seat. This is not just simple wasteful spending. This is a direct and conscious decision of your Liberal government to use taxpayer dollars to cancel gas plants.

Minister, I'll give you one last chance on this. Will you please tell us exactly how much you have booked in your fiscal plan for the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants? It's a simple question. Why not a simple answer?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have brought forward the materials necessary. The AG has signed off on our fiscal matters. We've been very open and transparent. We're the government that didn't hide \$5 billion

when they were last elected. We're not the government that is putting forward any secrets. We're being very open and transparent, and we're not selling off assets that are going to provide even more revenue and more growth for the province of Ontario. We're going to continue doing what's in the best interests of our public.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, our deficit is under control. We have what it takes to balance our books by 2017-18. We're exceeding our targets four years running. Our growth in spending last year was under 1%. Coming forward in our next budget, you're going to see even better results.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm sadly startled, Speaker, that the Minister of Finance says they've had no secrets; he has said they've been open and transparent. Then I ask the minister, why did you bury 40,000 to 60,000 documents, why did you keep the costs covered for so long, and why were you in on the decision around the cabinet table to bury the costs of the gas plant cancellation? It was PC members here in the House, supported by the NDP, who brought the contempt motion to the floor, who got the answers here. You try to keep it hidden. We want taxpayers to know the answers. It's far from no secrets. It's far from open and transparent.

Minister, this shakes our very confidence in your ability to bring in a budget that will actually get us some balance. It shakes our confidence in your ability to grow the economy. It shakes our confidence in this government's ability to help those 500,000 women and men, our friends, neighbours and relatives, who are out of work.

I'll ask you, why won't you be honest with taxpayers and tell us exactly what this is going to cost? Surely to goodness it must be in the budget plan. You know the numbers. You made the decision.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The people of Ontario want their representatives to represent them. I have been representing my community with pride and with responsibility. I have stood in this House, even prior to being elected, to defend the interests of our communities right across the province.

A mistake was made. We corrected it. You agreed with it. It should have been done much earlier. As a result, we're taking the actions necessary and we're taking the decisions that are necessary to get it right.

Mr. Speaker, we made other tough decisions, like tax reform, like lowering business taxes, like lowering consumer taxes, like ensuring that we have a value-added tax system that makes us competitive. As a result, we're the third-largest jurisdiction in North America to attract direct foreign investment. People are coming to Ontario. More businesses are coming here, and more jobs are being created because of the actions that we've taken.

The opposition are advocating a slash-and-burn policy that would hurt our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm incredulous that the finance minister would simply dismiss the cancellation of Oakville and Mississauga as a mistake that was made—a mistake that was made. This was not ordinary incompetence. This wasn't standard waste we've come to expect. This was you putting the Liberal Party ahead of the interests of taxpayers, ahead of the interests of jobs, ahead of the interests of ratepayers in our province. It was a deliberate decision to spend money to save Liberal seats, including yours.

We see what the thinking is. The minister says he has a duty to represent his constituents; he has a duty to be their representative. Sir, you have a duty to spend taxpayer money wisely. You have a duty to look out for the money that people send to Queen's Park, and you have the gall to spend a billion dollars to save your own seat. That's not what a finance minister does.

Speaker, clearly, it's time to change the government if this finance minister thinks he should spend a billion dollars to save his own seat. We can do a lot better than this. This finance minister is clearly out of his depth.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Be seated. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I said also that I have a duty and a responsibility to the province of Ontario. That's why the lessons learned—what we've done in terms of what we're going to do going forward in the siting of such projects will be corrected, and that is what's necessary.

We're always working for the best interests of the entire province, one thing that the opposition member and the leader has not been doing. In fact, he has been talking down Ontario by calling us a banana republic.

We are the province that has been leading all of Canada with more jobs than the rest of Canada combined. We're taking the necessary steps to try to promote certain sectors of our economy for greater economic renewal.

The opposition members would rather fight as opposed to collaborate. They would rather put us down than pick us up. Fortunately, the people of Ontario know better. They're willing to work. They're doing their job, and we're going to do ours, as well.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. In an interview in today's Wall Street Journal, the finance minister is quoted as saying, "People are aware of the fiscal realities before us. They know the government must take a measured approach to bend the cost curve and control our spending." Does the Premier agree with this view?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker; I absolutely agree that we need to take the measures necessary to stay on track to balance the budget by 2017-18. That's exactly what the Minister of Finance has been

talking about in the previous questions. It's what the leader of the third party will see as we bring our budget forward. That is what is expected of us by the people of Ontario.

In order to be able to deliver the services that everyone in this province needs, we need to make sure that we have fiscal responsibility along with investment in a fairer society. That's the balanced approach our budget will take.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, other media reports indicate that the government still plans to phase in new corporate tax loopholes that will let Ontario's biggest corporations write off the HST when they buy gas or take clients out on the town.

If the government is trying to bend the cost curve, why are they investing over a billion dollars a year in yet another no-strings-attached corporate tax loophole? Is that what the people of this province can expect from the Liberals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Finance will want to speak to the details, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to say that I think what is necessary now is to look at the budget in its entirety. It is an organic document in the sense that there are supports, obviously, for business—it's very important that we make sure that business is competitive and that we can bring business to the province—but at the same time, there are areas of concern that we have identified, that we know are areas that we need to be working on, and some of those I think the leader of the opposition would like to work on with us. Whether it's home care, whether it's youth unemployment, whether it's making sure that the social assistance system is unravelled in the sense that it becomes a more rational system—all of those things are areas that we want to work on. At the same time, we have to get our fiscal house in order.

We need to work towards a balanced budget in 2017-18, and that's what you'll see in the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, \$1.3 billion goes a lot of way to make the books balance, I've got to tell you.

Look, it's people who make our economy work, and it's people who need to be the priority when we plan for the future. But time and time again, they see a government that just doesn't seem to care about their challenges. They're scrambling to find home care for loved ones. They worry about their kids finding a decent job. They pay the bills that keep climbing higher and higher and higher, and the government tells them that they have to tighten their belts even more. But when it comes to handing Ontario's largest corporations yet another tax break, the belt can't be loosened quick enough.

How can the Premier tell people they have to pay more and expect less while she's handing Ontario's largest corporations over a billion dollars a year in HST breaks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the leader of the third party knows that the finance minister is working

with the federal finance minister on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker, because there is a connection between what the federal government does and what we do here in the province.

The reality is, the budget document will cover a range of issues. We are taking a balanced approach to putting this budget in place.

Indeed, our businesses are competitive and need to be competitive, and we are demonstrating that business is coming to Ontario. Jobs are being created. At the same time, we need to make sure that those services that are so critical to people's lives every single day improve, Mr. Speaker. There's always a way to make those services better and to continue to make sure that our young people, our First Nations children, our seniors, people across the province who need government supports have those supports.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. People are hoping for a new approach, but all Ontarians see is a Liberal government that's the same old same old. They see a government that has no problem spending what could be more than a billion dollars to cancel two private power deals, or spending over a billion dollars on a new corporate tax loophole, Speaker. But when it comes to a First Start program to get 25,000 young people working, or eliminating the home care wait-list in this province, the government is suddenly very cautious.

Will the government tell Ontarians whether they should expect another status quo Liberal budget this time around? Or will the Premier finally commit to putting families first?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I know that the leader of the third party—she and I have had conversations about these issues, and she has been very public about the issues that she identified. They were issues, in fact, that I had already identified during my leadership campaign, that were things that I want to work on. I've been very clear, whether it's home care or whether it's youth unemployment, those are things that are of deep concern to me, and they are things that we need to advance.

We need to make sure that we move the bar on those issues, because we know that there are more people who need home care, and they need it in a timely way. We know that there are young people who are not able to find a job, partly because of a mismatch between labour market and labour force, but also because I think we need to make better connections—labour, government and business. That's the kind of work we're going to be doing as a result of our budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People understand very well that these are tough times, and they want to see smart investments that will improve health care, that will create jobs and that will make life more affordable for them. Instead, they see a government that seems much more interested in helping themselves with hundreds of mil-

lions of dollars spent on private power deals that help the Liberal Party, and over a billion dollars on yet more corporate tax loopholes about to open up.

Why won't the Premier put corporate tax loopholes on ice and make the people of this province the priority in this upcoming budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question, but let's be clear: There is no new corporate tax loophole that's being opened up. These are, as you know, restricted input tax credits that are—and it's not a billion dollars; I think the rough number is around \$600 million. But, regardless, we are taking steps to close those loopholes. We are taking steps to ensure that we protect the interests of Ontario. That's what we've been saying and that's what we're doing. We look forward to continuing to work together to try to find the best way forward to both support business and encourage investment while, at the same time, ensuring that Ontario has what it takes to balance its books by 2017-18.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When times are tough, you have to make some pretty tough choices. New Democrats don't think this is the time for new, no-strings-attached billion-dollar handouts to corporations so that they don't have to pay the HST. It makes no sense at all.

Instead, we think this is a time to invest in prosperity that everyone can share in, not just a few well-connected insiders. Instead of billions of dollars spent on gas plants or billions of dollars spent on corporate tax loopholes, we think it's time to invest in jobs, health care and making life more affordable for the people who make this province work.

Will the Premier agree that now is not the time for a corporate tax loophole, but rather a time for a balanced approach that puts people first, instead of the Liberal approach that puts insiders first?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, that's what we're saying. We're taking a balanced approach. We're not going to take extreme measures that would hurt our sensitive recovery, a slash-and-burn, across-the-board cut to an Ontario government that's already the lowest-cost-per-capita government anywhere in Canada, but we're also not going to take extreme measures of taxing and overspending that would also hurt our economic recovery.

We need to be on that balanced approach, on that road to ensuring that we eliminate and tackle our deficit by 2017-18, and that means eliminating these tax loopholes. I've committed to doing that. Our party has said we would. We're taking those measures. We're dealing with the federal government as well, and we're going to encourage that we're all at our best. I hope everybody will work with us as well.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: For the Minister of Finance: Anyone who has ever watched the budget process knows this one is more than just odd. When I asked the minister

for a date last week, he dismissed me and said, "Imminently." Budgets usually come in March, prior to the end of the previous fiscal year; next week, it will be May.

Liberals cannot fathom what the word "balance" even means. The minister's numbers don't add up, but he promises balance by 2017-18. We can only conclude that there's no plan, just a black hole that keeps on expanding and swallowing up Ontario.

Yes, Minister, we'll all know more after your speech at noon, but the Economic Club of Canada is a group of business people who pay to hear you talk. Why won't you just tell all Ontarians right now, for free, how you can control spending without a single piece of legislation aimed at doing that? Ontario's jobs and spending crisis aren't even on your radar. Are you planning on slamming Ontarians with massive tax increases?

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Hon. Charles Sousa: I've been waiting, and I've been talking with all members of the opposition, as well as my own caucus. More importantly, I have been consulting with people all across our province. We've touched more people than we've ever done before in preparing a budget that speaks to them.

In our consultations with the member opposite was the delivery of the finance committee's report. I've committed to reviewing that report prior to announcing our budget. I received it just last week at the end of the week. I'm making every commitment possible to work together, and I'm hopeful that you'll read the budget before you announce what you're going to do, because you're already saying you won't even approve it. We have a strong plan, a plan that's balanced, a plan that's going to take us on a path to recovery, a plan that's going to ensure that we balance our books by 2017-18.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Minister, you may soon have a budget, but most people watching you seem to feel much like we do: You have no credible plan. You're in the front benches of a government that has nothing in the cupboard because it tosses taxpayer money down the drain. Imagine how far the billion-plus power plant dollars burned by the McGuinty-Wynne election team would have gone if available now, or the \$300-million-plus and counting that you've handed teachers to cover your missteps of last fall.

Minister, tell us how you plan to balance the budget by 2017-18 as you have promised. What will we call them: new taxes, levies, fees, premiums? Here's the thing, Minister: You cannot just come in here next week, read a speech and expect Ontarians to believe one single thing you say. The record for your non-mandated government speaks for itself. What is being cut? What is increasing?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite just made up a bunch of numbers that are untrue. Unlike the opposition, when they were in power—in fact, they came out with a budget that was untrue: \$5 billion in the hole—we have proven that we can exceed our targets. For four years in a row, we have been able to surpass everything that we said we would do because we're working together with Ontarians. We have attracted more invest-

ment than any other place in Canada, and we'll continue to work with them to ensure that businesses see Ontario as a good place to do business. We will continue to ensure that our public and our people are at their best and working. We have over 400,000 net new jobs since the recessionary lows.

The entire world is having issues with their growth. We recognize that. That's why we're taking measured steps. That's why we're taking restraint measures to ensure that we balance our books by 2017-18. We're moving towards that target. I look forward to having you read the budget—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Finance. In 2010, this government made changes to the auto insurance system in Ontario that slashed benefits in Ontario paid out to drivers by 50% and to drivers in the GTA by 70%. Last week in committee hearings, the IBC themselves admitted that these changes resulted in \$2 billion of annual savings for the insurance industry. The IBC themselves admitted it. Yet in the past two years, drivers have seen their own premiums go up by 5%. When will this government pass on a portion of those billions of dollars of savings to drivers in Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: You just sort of answered it, didn't you? You just said that the measures we took with the anti-fraud task force to go at the root causes of that fraud to ensure that we're able to lower some of those costs will enable us to have the opportunity to have reduced premiums. We need to do just that.

I agree that premiums are too high. I agree that in Ontario the costs of insurance are 10 times higher than provinces in other parts of Canada. So we need to ensure that we work together to reduce those costs and ultimately reduce our premiums, and that's what we're working towards doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Just to correct the Minister of Finance, it's not the anti-fraud task force; it's this government's decision to slash the benefits paid out by insurance companies to drivers in Ontario that resulted in those billions of savings. On April 12, FSCO released its annual report for the first quarter of 2013. No surprise: There's absolutely no cut to the premiums for drivers in Ontario.

In the upcoming budget, this government has a choice. It can either choose to again support the multi-billion dollar insurance industry or it can pass on the billions of dollars of savings to drivers in Ontario. Which will it be?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear. When the NDP were in power, insurance rates went up 27%. When the PCs were in power, they went up 43%. We took power in 2003, and in 2004 we put legislation in place to try to lower those insurance premiums; we are now working with the opposition to try to do the same in 2013. We'll

get there. We'll work with you. The people of Ontario expect us to do just that.

I agree that we need to lower those premiums. We need to work with the industry to make it so. Let's do that together.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the dedicated and experienced Minister of the Environment.

Today, people across the province and around the world will be celebrating Earth Day, an initiative to show public support for environmental protection. This year, it is estimated that Earth Day will take place in more than 190 countries, with over a billion people participating in activities to support our environment.

I know that in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, families will be taking part in events to show their support for tackling climate change.

Speaker, through you, would the minister be able to explain the significance of Earth Day and what the people are doing to participate in this important event?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Excellent question. Today marks the 43rd Earth Day since its civic observance first took place on April 22, 1970. This year, individuals, businesses, schools and organizations across the province will be joining the over one billion people across the globe taking part in their communities to address environmental issues.

Everyone can take part in Earth Day. Just one act symbolizes the difference we can make in addressing climate change. For example, on the weekend, I joined BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association, in Beachway Park, for a shoreline cleanup, where it was great to see so many people pitching in to help in the environmental cleanup.

I was also able to join the many volunteers in Streetsville on Sunday. Along with Credit Valley Conservation and the Sierra Club group, we honoured greenbelt champion Peter Orphanos and planted trees in his memory.

It was encouraging to see people around the province know that their efforts are making a difference in the fight against climate change and environmental degradation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for providing this House with some examples of the wonderful work people are undertaking to help protect the environment.

The theme for this year's Earth Day is "The Face of Climate Change." The Earth Day Network describes the faces of climate change as those facing the reality of its effects—and there are other faces: the faces that are doing their part to fix the problem, just like the people you participated with over the weekend.

Speaker, through you, would the minister be able to explain what our government is doing to ensure that we are a part of those faces that are working to fix the problem?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, our government is phasing out coal and replacing it, through the Green

Energy Act, with thousands of megawatts of emission-free electricity. Coal-fired electricity generation, with its huge CO₂ emissions, is down by more than 95% since 2003.

We invested \$16 billion in public transit, to address the largest domestic source of smog-causing pollutants in Ontario: motor vehicles.

We're also committed to stopping urban sprawl in the GTA through initiatives such as the greenbelt, which protects nearly two million acres of green space, the equivalent of Prince Edward Island.

The Far North Act protects a land mass of 225,000 square kilometres.

In 2005, we passed the Places to Grow Act to protect our agricultural lands and green spaces from urban sprawl.

By 2020, we will have fulfilled our commitment to plant 50 million trees in southern Ontario.

Just last week, the federal government's National Inventory Report showed that from 2005 to 2011, greenhouse gas emissions in—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, this is a statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I know my job.

New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Premier, it would appear that everything you've done on this gas plant scandal has been to benefit the Liberal Party. Nothing, absolutely nothing, was done in the interest of any of the taxpayers.

You told us that the cost of Mississauga was \$190 million when the Auditor General told us that you had to know all along the true cost was \$275 million. In fact, most of it was already paid out when you announced that bogus number.

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It's clear you can't be trusted with our money. The confidence of your government is at stake here. Premier, will you stand up and give us one good reason to believe anything you ever say?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've done exactly what I said I was going to do. I said during the leadership that when I got into office, I would be opening up the process, I would provide opportunity for every single question that was asked to be answered, that we would make sure that every document that was asked for was made available. I started acting on that the day that I came into this office. In fact, we offered to broaden the scope of the committee, and the party opposite did not want to do that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order. The member from Renfrew needs to sit in his seat so I can tell him not to talk.

Thank you. Finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the scope of the committee is broader, that

every question can be answered, that all documentation can be and has been asked for. That is what I said I would do. That is what I have done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, let me give you the latest example of your government saying one thing when the complete opposite is true. Last week, your energy minister had the nerve to say, "We were not in a very good bargaining position, mainly because the opposition forced us to show our hand and put all documents on the table, and ... compromised our bargaining position." Premier, your bogus \$40-million Oakville number was announced before any of the documents were ever released. How could he stand and say that?

With the confidence of your government at stake, why do you continue to spread this nonsense? I ask you again, stand up and give us one good reason to ever believe anything you ever say again.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we've been extremely transparent on this issue all the way through. We have a committee that's working—and we have a person who's leading this for the opposition. His brand is a yellow tie, but I think he wants to change his yellow tie for a trench coat and call himself Columbo, because he's trying to parse and split every fact and every answer in committee and make a tremendous scandal out of it.

We've been open, we've been transparent, we've been sharing the information. Most importantly we have accepted the Auditor General's report, and we're encouraging the committee to move forward and be diligent in trying to get better rules for locating energy sites.

ELLIOT LAKE INQUIRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier this morning.

Elliot Lake is still looking for answers into the devastating Algo Mall collapse from last June. The legal counsel for the mall action committee and the Seniors' Action Group of Elliot Lake at the public inquiry is now unable to continue representing these groups because his office has not been paid by the Liberal government since last summer. Even the commissioner himself indicated that this was a concern for the commission counsel and staff.

For a community that has suffered so much, this government-caused delay is utterly unacceptable. Will the Premier commit to removing barriers at the Elliot Lake inquiry so that the voices of the victims are not silenced one minute longer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: We know how important the Elliot Lake inquiry is, first of all. That's why it was initiated within a week or so after the tragedy took place.

I've looked into the issue that's been raised with respect to the payment of the lawyers. It's my understanding that the bill was actually submitted sometime near the end of February and it's being looked after today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the Premier: As stated in the order in council, it is the responsibility of the Attorney General's office to reimburse the legal fees of the participants who are granted funding. Yet the government hasn't fulfilled its responsibilities in Elliot Lake for eight months now.

It is shameful that this government's failures have put extra hurdles in the victims' quests to get answers. Will the Premier ensure that these delays do not hurt the families of the victims, as well as the community, who are desperately waiting for answers?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, Speaker, absolutely. We want to get down to the bottom of this. We want the inquiry to get to the bottom of this. As I indicated before, the first legal bill that was presented to the government was sometime near the end of February. It went through an assessment process as soon as the story came out that the lawyer wasn't being paid. We've looked into it, and it's being looked after today.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, since 2003, our government has built a clean, reliable energy system in Ontario. We have introduced stability into the system, invested in renewable energy to become a leader in North America and created a culture of conservation across Ontario. Those investments have helped us get off of coal-fired generation and ensure that Ontarians have clean air to breathe.

Minister, I know a key part of our energy system has been the long-term plan. Will the minister please update the House on what our government is doing to plan for our future of our energy system?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for Ottawa-Ottawa-Ottawa. We've made real progress in Ontario's energy sector since 2003. The long-term energy plan has been an important part of that progress.

The energy sector is constantly evolving, and that's why a three-year review was part of the plan. That's why I announced last week that we will be conducting a formal review of the long-term energy plan to be completed within six months. Our review will be based on a strong and transparent consultation process with the public, municipalities and the energy sector. Consultation sessions will be held in every region of the province, and we'll engage the aboriginal communities and their leaders. I'm particularly interested in reviewing our supply mix, how conservation can play a larger role and how we can create a predictable and stable clean energy procurement process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for your response. As we look to the future of our energy sector, I'm glad to see strong leadership from our government as we look to the best way to evolve. Public consultation is an important part of what we do as a government. I'm glad it will be central to the review.

Minister, you mentioned three key areas for consultation as part of our long-term energy plan review: supply mix, conservation and procurement of clean energy. These are issues that affect the members of my community and families and businesses around the province. Speaker, would the minister expand on those key areas?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you to the member, again. The member is right: There will be three core areas of our review. The first is to receive feedback on Ontario's supply mix, which is one the greatest strengths of our electricity system right now. We'll ask broad questions about where and how Ontario should produce power in the future.

The second element is conservation. Our government strongly feels that conservation must play a more prominent role. Whether it's through our innovative smart grid or home retrofitting, conservation gives ratepayers power over how much energy they use and how much they pay for it.

Finally, we will create a predictable and sustainable clean energy procurement process. We will provide the right conditions to continue building our green energy industry, including listening to municipalities and recognizing that communities want greater involvement in local energy projects.

We've had great success in our energy system, and I look forward to building on that success.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, the member for Don Valley West was the co-chair of the Liberal election campaign in 2011. In that capacity, she was responsible for a decision that she knew would result in the appropriation of millions of tax dollars for the sole purpose of getting the member who sits to her immediate left re-elected. It's also widely known that that same member played a key role in her election as leader of the Liberal Party. Now he's the finance minister, and she's the Premier.

Would the Premier tell us what she plans on doing to repay that campaign debt of \$275 million to the taxpayers of this province?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will just say that I was very clear during my leadership bid that there had been a decision made about the moving of gas plants. There was a cost associated with that. Everyone agreed that those gas plants should move. We have acted on that. What I said was that we were going to make sure that all the questions that were being asked were going to be answered, that all the documentation would be available. We opened up the process, Mr. Speaker. I did exactly what I said I was going to do, and we will continue on that path, making sure the questions get answered. That's why I asked the Auditor General—I asked the Auditor General—to look at the Oakville situation. That is what's happening, and we await his report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The Auditor General made it very clear that spending \$275 million to move that gas plant was a decision of the Liberal Party of Ontario. The Liberal Party may consider it acceptable to spend \$275 million to save one seat. We don't, and we don't believe the taxpayers of this province do either. We certainly hope that the third party doesn't support that either and won't prop up a government that is so scandal-ridden.

I will repeat my question one more time: Will the Premier stand up—she's already admitted it was a political decision—and tell us how they are going to make it up to the taxpayers of this province? Don't give us a budget that will mean nothing. Call an election and have the people of the province pass judgment on her decisions.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite has acknowledged that there was a political aspect to these decisions. Every candidate in the party opposite who was close to this issue in the ridings that they were running in advanced the position of those parties that they would cancel those gas plants. That's what they said. That was their position.

I really believe that Ontarians want to see people in this Legislature working together. We're going to bring a budget forward, and we're taking a balanced approach to that budget.

I hope that both the parties opposite look at that budget and they realize that we are on track, that we are going to balance our budget by 2017-18, that we are being fiscally responsible, and then they will look at the investments that we propose to make sure that we have as fair a society as possible. I hope they will look at that balanced approach. I believe that that is what the people of Ontario want us to be doing as a government, and they want that discussion to happen in this Legislature.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The last couple of days, we have been witnessing some pretty serious flooding in Huntsville, Kawartha Lakes and the Muskokas. We hope and expect that the province will provide residents in those communities with timely assistance.

Flood victims in Thunder Bay are still waiting for help, even though a flood that devastated 700 homes in that community happened almost a year ago. Last week, the Thunder Bay flood victims learned that the government will only provide \$300,000 for private damage claims to houses and small businesses.

When will this government focus more on helping people and less on public relations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I just want to comment on the recent flooding we heard about this week. I want to commend and commend the people and the staff and the first

responders in the town of Bracebridge, the town of Huntsville, the town of Bancroft, the city of Kawartha Lakes, the township of Minden Hills, the township of South Algonquin and the municipality of Markstay-Warren. Certainly, they have been under great duress over the last week, and I want to thank them for their hard work and their dedication to their community.

Certainly, Emergency Management Ontario and municipal staff are working on the ground. We have my ministry, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and we have the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Transportation all helping on that front and helping the mayors and the individuals to minimize damage. Certainly, we want to offer our assistance.

In the supplementary, obviously, I will get back to the Thunder Bay issue that the member opposite raises.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier herself, Premier Wynne, promised up to \$3.2 million during her tour of the flood-damaged areas of Thunder Bay last year. But instead of the usual \$2 contribution for every dollar raised locally, the flood victims of Thunder Bay are only getting 20 cents on the dollar. This nickel-and-diming is hard to take for people who have already lost so much.

The government can find \$275 million to cancel the Mississauga gas plant. Why can't it pony up \$3 million for the flood victims of Thunder Bay?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: The province committed up to \$17.2 million to Thunder Bay and area municipalities. The ODRAP program has been on the ground since the flood occurred last year. We were there immediately to help, and certainly we're ready to provide more than is actually currently projected.

The city of Thunder Bay asked the province to help cover the cost of their Safe Homes program, and because things are covered under private insurance, some of the items reimbursed from this program were actually not eligible. We're working with the municipality. We understand that when you're in the middle of a crisis, you try and reimburse your community. We're there on the ground, helping. We have made substantial investments. We continue to do that because we want to make sure that this community gets back on its feet as quickly as possible.

I plan to be in Thunder Bay later this week to talk with the mayor and councillors to make sure that we have the receipts we need because, at the end of the day, we have an Auditor General we're responsible to. We have to provide the paperwork, but we want to be there to help that community.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Our government is making record investments in public transit, which will benefit my riding of Scarborough Southwest, where constituents rely on public transit to get to work and to get to school.

I know that reducing congestion is a priority in the GTHA region, and I'm happy that our government is moving forward to address this need. But many of my constituents are looking for more flexibility and convenience when using public transit to get home to their families. They need options if their work demands make them stay late, and they shouldn't have to worry about whether transit will be available when they want to go home.

The government's recent announcement that 30-minute GO train service is coming to the Lakeshore line will address many of these concerns. Could the minister please update the House on this recent announcement?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm just wondering if my opposition critics could stand up so we could all figure out who they are, because it's one of the best-kept secrets in the House. I am indebted to members on this side for holding the government accountable on transit and transportation yet again. Maybe we should double the member's pay because he has to be an MPP on the government side and do the opposition's job. The member is quite correct because he does the math before he makes commitments. He actually reads budgets before he votes on them—another uniquely Liberal attribute, Mr. Speaker.

We are introducing half-hour or better GO service all day, and the greatest advantage is, you don't have to fumble with the schedule and figure out whether the train is at 11:17. It will be there when you get to the station. This is the biggest expansion of GO in its history, and we're darned proud to be moving on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thanks to the minister for his excellent answer. GO Transit's new seasonal weekend schedule sounds much improved, and summer travel should be made more convenient than ever. My constituents in Scarborough Southwest will be pleased to hear that our transit investments are making public transit a better choice for commuters. This will reduce congestion on our roads and improve quality of life for Ontario families.

But it's strange to me that this service will stop short of Hamilton. It seems like a natural fit for residents there, and I know that people in Hamilton and Scarborough Southwest will be wondering why the service stops before it reaches them.

Can the minister explain why this 30-minute, all-day, two-way GO service will not be extended to Hamilton?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I kind of love Hamilton. It's one of my favourite cities in the country.

The challenge we have is that the tracks from Aldershot to Hamilton are not owned by us. They're owned by CN and CP, and we continue to negotiate with them.

But I'm happy to report that is not stopping us from improving service to Hamilton. As a matter of fact, we are building a new GO station in Hamilton, supporting the great work of LIUNA. Hamilton will now have two GO stations. Two more trips will be added in the morning and the afternoon, starting in 2015 as one of the leg-

acies of those amazing Pan Am Games. We continue to spend hundreds of millions and billions of dollars in improving track capacity.

But I would suggest that when the opposition was in power and froze funding for GO, had they not done that, we'd already be in Hamilton.

1130

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Premier this morning. As the chair of the cabinet meeting where the cost of the Oakville cancellation was discussed, it's clear that you know the cost of cancelling the gas plant. Yet whenever you're asked about the cost of cancelling the gas plant on the floor of the House here, you bring up your offer to appear before committee.

Premier, surely we shouldn't have to haul you before committee like some Quebec construction industry snitch just to get an answer to a question. How long do you really expect the Liberal farm team to my left to prop you up and prop up your scandal-plagued government when you can't even answer a simple question?

This is question period. I'm expecting an answer. I would hope to get an answer from you. If you can give an answer at committee down the road somewhere, then you can tell us right now: How much will it cost to cancel—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I want to read one paragraph from the memorandum of understanding with respect to the costs, and I would like to challenge the member who asked the question to tell me what it means:

"[T]he OPA shall pay to TCE the positive difference, if any, between (i) the aggregate amount of costs confirmed by the opinion of an independent auditor to have been paid by TCE in respect of costs contemplated by sections 2(a) and (b) of this schedule B and (ii) the amount paid by the OPA to TCE in accordance with the provisions of sections 2(a) and (b) of this schedule B; or TCE shall pay to the OPE the positive difference, if any, between (i) the amount paid by the OPA to TCE in accordance with the provisions of sections 2(a) and (b) of this schedule B, and (ii) the aggregate amount of costs confirmed by the opinion of an independent auditor to have been paid by TCE in respect of costs contemplated by sections 2(a) and (b) of this schedule B."

That's why we have the Auditor General looking into the costs and that's why we'll accept his report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The fake transparency continues.

I'd like to ask the member a question. Maybe he should ask Bob Delaney how much \$1.3 billion would go—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, on September 24, 2012, an agreement was signed between the province of Ontario, TransCanada and the OPA which set out the

details of the cost of the Oakville plant. They were put on the website. There's also a 216-page contract signed by the parties that's on the website. We now have the Ontario Power Authority and the Auditor General looking into verifying the costs in a report that will be provided by the Auditor General of Ontario.

We are awaiting the report of the Auditor General to deal with those difficult clauses in trying to calculate the cost.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last month, St. Joseph's Health Care centre announced the closure of the hydrotherapy pool. This pool regularly serves 300 residents, many of whom face significant health challenges and issues.

I have dozens of letters from seniors like Ms. Hilda Petch who are devastated by the closure. Ms. Petch wrote, "Ten years ago I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis and osteoporosis, and I looked for something that would help me ... and the pool has been the answer for me."

My question is simple: Is the minister going to allow the hydrotherapy pool to close or will she intervene?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Of course, I have also heard from people who would like to see the pool remain open. What I can say is that hospitals across the province, including St. Joe's in London, are looking very closely at their budgets. They must continue to provide that important service that can be delivered only in hospitals. If there are services they are providing that can be delivered in the community, then that is the appropriate thing to do.

I know that St. Joe's hospital has determined that there are facilities outside of the hospital that can provide this important care for people. I look forward to the supplementary and I could talk about some of the reforms we're making on physiotherapy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The community pools don't meet the needs of these patients because the hydrotherapy pools are designed for medical reasons, to help them for rehab. The hospital is looking for \$6.3 million in savings and they feel as though they can't justify the \$25,000 expense of hydrotherapy, but this closure is nothing short of penny-wise and pound foolish. The future cost of caring for 300 residents who will lose their main source of rehab and therapy will undoubtedly be more expensive than the cost of keeping these people healthy. A solution needs to be found. Will the minister take the steps necessary to ensure that the community continues to have access to this vital service?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course, it's very important to me that the people who take advantage of that pool now do have access to other places in the community that can provide that kind of physio, that kind of health—last week, I was very pleased to announce that we are almost doubling the number of people in this

province, most of them seniors, who will have access to one-on-one physiotherapy and exercise programs and falls prevention programs. By changing the way we deliver those services, we're going to be able to significantly expand access, including in communities that do not currently have access to those physiotherapy clinics. This is advice that we've received from Dr. Samir Sinha, from Dr. David Walker and, indeed, from Dr. Don Drummond.

We've also got the support of the Ontario Physiotherapy Association and seniors and their advocates right across the province.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, l'honorable Brad Duguid.

Recently, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities released the new tuition framework for post-secondary education. I know first-hand from encountering families and students in my riding of Etobicoke North that there's a sense of gratitude and anticipation about our government's steps to make post-secondary education more affordable.

To finance their education, many students in Etobicoke North have part-time and summer jobs. Studying at the post-secondary level and financing a degree or a diploma can be a significant concern and undertaking. The reduction in tuition caps has significantly helped students in my riding, but many students and families worry that this initiative won't be enough.

Speaker, through you, I ask the minister, on behalf of students in Etobicoke North and beyond: Will the minister please inform the House what other programs, initiatives and directives will allow students in our province to access our world-class post-secondary system?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know that the member has been speaking to students in his riding just by virtue of the issues he brings forward in the question. I think it's safe to say that students would have liked to have seen us go even further, but they understand that we're trying to balance quality with affordability. Frankly, we're not willing to compromise on either. This measure will save the average undergrad student in university about \$1,200 over the course of this tuition framework, which is really important.

Despite the tough fiscal times that we've been going through, our government has implemented the 30%-off tuition grant that goes to low- and middle-income students. In all, 230,000 low- and middle-income students are benefitting from that grant this year. That's making our post-secondary education system more affordable and more accessible, and reducing the burden of student debt.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much. I beg the indulgence of the House. I want to introduce my

constituent Janet MacDougall and her daughter Marnie, who are here with us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm proud to welcome the extraordinary recipients of the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. We are joined here today in the members' gallery by Janelle Brady, Mariah Bunz, Alex Escobar, Tyson Grinsell, Mohsin Khan, Josie Linton, Jean-Phillippe Vinette, Haleigh Wiggins and Stephanie Zhou.

We also have members of the advisory council in attendance. Please join me in welcoming Robert Bennett, Shaun Chen, Nancy Averill, Alexis Smith and Rashad Saad. Welcome very much. Welcome to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and congratulations.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome two people from the Trillium Gift of Life Network who are making their way in: Ronnie Gavsie and Versha Prakash. I think we will be speaking about organ and tissue donation.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce two guests this afternoon. I'm pleased to have His Worship Mayor Terry Clayton of the township of Brock and regional councillor Debbie Bath, also of Brock township, who are here today to attend the awarding of an Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers to one of our constituents, Josie Linton.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO GREEN SPACE

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's my pleasure to recognize that today is Earth Day and speak about the benefits of having sustainable green space in Toronto and indeed across this province.

I've been informed by many in the University of Toronto community that important green space is about to be permanently removed. This June, there are plans to dig up a significant part of the natural heritage landscape of U of T's campus to replace it with synthetic AstroTurf for the use of field hockey in the 2015 Pan Am Games.

Green space is an important and valuable part of our environment. It helps contribute to healthy living by providing space for the community to enjoy the outdoors. Preserving these spaces helps keep a clean earth for future generations.

Though a venue for field hockey is an important aspect of the Pan Am Games, I sincerely hope the minister has weighed the importance of green space for the community against possible alternative venues.

I'd like to recognize the University of Toronto Keep Back Campus Green movement for raising awareness on this issue. They've collected close to 5,000 signatures in

support of saving this green space, and their commitment to the environment should be applauded.

I hope that the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games responds to this group and gives consideration to their concerns.

TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: More and more, we're getting complaints from constituents across my riding, and I imagine it's the same in Algoma-Manitoulin as it is in Sudbury and other communities, where people who have been truck drivers—commercial truck drivers—for many and many a year are now being refused access into the United States when driving into the States because of Ontario's driver's card.

The issue is that the American government has a rule that doesn't allow particular people to drive commercial vehicles in the event that they have certain medical conditions. That is not the case in Ontario. For example, a person who has diabetes, or a person who has a disease that we're able to treat, is allowed to drive commercial vehicles in Ontario.

Ontario is now putting a code on the driver's licence that makes it, when the commercial driver drives into the United States, that that person is refused entry because the code says they have a medical condition. They're unable to cross the border. Clearly this is an oversight, I would hope, on the part of the Ministry of Transportation in doing this, or it's part of the Homeland Security issue, in which case, either way, this is not on. We have our rules here in the United States because of something we're doing is wrong. If United States has rules, it's up to them to figure out which of our drivers are classed in any way. It shouldn't be up to us to divulge that information freely and openly to the United States and their customs.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am honoured today to rise in the House to give recognition to St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church of the village of Weston, which this year celebrates the 160th anniversary of the church as a community of faith and the 100th anniversary of its recognition as a parish within the archdiocese of Toronto.

The church was honoured to celebrate its anniversaries on Sunday, April 14, 2013, with His Excellency Bishop John A. Boissonneau, auxiliary bishop of Toronto.

A hundred and sixty years ago the Catholic community in Weston came together to establish a church so they could worship together. The community of St. John the Evangelist has grown through many difficult and exciting decades, always being an important part of the community of York South-Weston.

The church is, Mr. Speaker, the little parish with heart in the big city, and I wish to extend my most heartfelt congratulations to the church, pastor Father Michael McGourty, laypersons and staff, and to all its parish-

ioners for 160 years of playing a vital, vibrant, central role in the community. This community will soon also be looking forward to having a new school built next to it, a brand new elementary school that bears the name of St. John the Evangelist Catholic School.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, last November the PC Party laid out a bold new plan to protect consumers, preserve our environment and create good-paying jobs in the recycling sector. The plan starts with ending the eco tax schemes that Liberals created in 2008 and in 2009 so that government can be returned to its role as a regulator.

The PC Party would improve our environment and kick-start economic growth in the recycling sector by setting measurable and achievable waste diversion targets, establishing environmental standards and monitoring those outcomes. We'd apply this approach to much more than the Liberals' fixation on less than 5% of Ontario's annual waste accounted for in their three costly eco tax programs. All three of these programs—for electronics, tires and household hazardous materials—have failed to make waste diversion the cost of doing business, because the Liberals continue to approve new eco-tax schemes that allow companies to pass those costs on to consumers at the cash register.

Now we've heard the environment minister say that none of this money goes to the government. Well, that's simply not true. In fact, over the last four years the Liberals have allowed its recycling agencies to embed \$10 million a year in hidden HST charges into eco taxes. To add insult to injury, those eco taxes are then subject to HST again. That means every time Ontarians purchase an item that has an eco tax, they're paying a tax on a tax on a tax. If anyone wants to know why the Liberals will stop at nothing to prop up their failing eco tax programs, simply follow the money.

NORTHERN ONTARIO AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, you're going to enjoy this. I know you like fish, so let's talk about Algoma-Manitoulin fishing.

For the past two weeks in the Ontario Legislature, we have been talking about the importance of local food. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a group in my riding that is working to provide sustainable, healthy, local food to Ontarians. The Northern Ontario Aquaculture Association represents the environmentally sustainable cage culture and land-based agri-food fish farming industry primarily based here in Ontario.

As part of the northern growth plan, the government identified aquaculture as a promising sector. The Ontario aquaculture sector contributes to local economies while producing safe, quality foods for many Ontarians to enjoy. The northern aquaculture industry is a source of sustainable economic development and employs innova-

tive research and practices. The Northern Ontario Aquaculture Association works with aquaculture operators to ensure ongoing research on issues pertaining specifically to the industry, working to promote and enhance aquaculture in Ontario.

Local cage culture operations in Lake Huron produce over nine million pounds of rainbow trout annually, with the deep cold water of the lake providing an ideal environment for raising the fish.

Aquaculture and related activities contribute more than \$50 million annually to the Ontario economy, supporting over 200 jobs.

1310

Farmed fish is naturally low in sodium and is an excellent source of protein, allowing Ontarians better access to healthy foods.

While we continue to discuss the importance of local foods, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a group in Algoma-Manitoulin who are providing locally fresh, healthy options to the community and Ontarians.

BAHA'I COMMUNITY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I stand in this House, joined by my colleague Reza Moridi, MPP for Richmond Hill, to wish the people of the Baha'i faith a joyful Ridvan.

Ridvan is a 12-day religious festival, and is one of the most important celebrations in the Baha'i faith. Often referred to as "the king of festivals," it takes its name from the Garden of Ridvan, located near Baghdad, Iraq. The site is historically significant, as it is a location where Baha'u'llah, the faith's founder, spent 12 days prior to his religious journey to Istanbul before declaring that he was a divine messenger in 1863.

Beginning at sunset on April 20, until sunset May 2, followers of the Baha'i faith honour the 12 days that Baha'u'llah spent in the Garden of Ridvan by celebrating spring and a renewal of spirituality.

There are approximately 12,000 individuals who practise the Baha'i faith living in Ontario, and more than five million followers globally. This includes the great ridings of Oak Ridges-Markham and Richmond Hill, which are home to a number of families practising the Baha'i faith and celebrating the festival of Ridvan.

I would like to wish everyone celebrating this 12-day religious festival a happy Ridvan.

MILTON LEGION CRIBBAGE TEAM

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's my pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to congratulate four legionnaires from the great riding of Halton. Ken Johnson, Gloria Murray, and Phyllis and Carson Smith from the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 136, Milton, were recently crowned Ontario Legion cribbage champions.

Legion sports are an important part of the Legion activities, offering members the opportunity to compete against each other and other branches in a wide variety of

sports and gaming events. Some of the activities include darts, euchre, cribbage, pool, curling, golf, track and field, and many more. Legion sports are separated into two categories, one being for adults and the other for youth under 17. Legion members can show their talents by competing and advancing from the branch level to zone level to provincial, and even the national dominion level, where competition is of an expert calibre.

For the Milton Legion cribbage team, travelling to Liverpool, Nova Scotia on Friday to take on other provincial championship teams from across the country will be no small task. I have complete confidence in our Milton team to bring back first place to Branch 136.

I would ask all members of the House to join with me in wishing the Milton Legion cribbage team all the best as they compete for gold at the Dominion cribbage championship.

Good luck to Ken, Gloria, Phyllis and Carson. I know that you will do us proud in Nova Scotia. I also know that you'll have a pretty good time, and after all, that's what it's all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dare I—15-4 and there ain't no more.

The member for Oakville.

OAKVILLE AWARDS FOR BUSINESS EXCELLENCE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House and tell you that I had the opportunity recently to attend the 18th annual Oakville Awards for Business Excellence, hosted by the Oakville Chamber of Commerce. The awards are dedicated to recognizing models of excellence and community service by Oakville's businesses.

I'd like to congratulate SOS First Aid for winning small business of the year and Astound Group Inc. for winning the large business category. Other winners include Cucci Ristorante for best restaurant; Oakville Endoscopy Centre for best professional services provider; and Dufferin Construction for best community builder.

I'd also like to congratulate Tal Dehtiar from Oliberté Limited for receiving the young entrepreneur of the year award, as well as Michelle Eglington from Euro-Line Appliances for being named the best employee.

On the eve of hosting the Canadian Open, Glen Abbey golf course was named best hospitality and visitor attraction, and Ford was named Oakville's business icon.

I'd like to applaud the chamber for hosting another great event, for raising funds that go to numerous youth and academic programs, and I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate all those who were nominated and all those who won that evening.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Happy Earth Day, Speaker.

I wanted to let everyone know that I will be introducing a private member's bill this afternoon entitled the Aggregate Recycling Promotion Act. I chose Earth Day to introduce my PMB because at its heart, the Aggregate Recycling Promotion Act is about helping to address the need for aggregates while at the same time preserving the finite supply of land from which we extract.

Currently across Ontario, there are dozens of public sector bodies like the Ministry of Transportation and select municipalities that are doing a great job incorporating recycled aggregates into their construction work, but we can do more. There are still too many cases where bids to complete public sector construction work are restricted to using only 100% virgin or primary aggregates, thereby excluding recycled materials from being considered.

Recycled aggregates have proven to be as safe and reliable as primary aggregates. No one should be prevented from competing for a contract solely because they propose to use recycled aggregates.

If an Ontario business wants to make a bid to build or resurface a road, then they should be able to include recycled aggregates in their proposal. That is not something we should be stopping; that is something we should be promoting.

During the review of the Aggregate Resources Act last year, we heard from countless presenters that more recycled aggregate should be used in Ontario. Today I say to my fellow members: Let's get it done, let's show some leadership and let's promote aggregate recycling in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Prince Edward-Hastings has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy concerning the cost of the Oakville gas plant cancellation. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Nipissing has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning the cost of the Oakville gas plant cancellation. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Newmarket-Aurora has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —the Attorney General will not only sit in his seat, if he wants to heckle, and then when he sits in his seat, I'll tell him to stop heckling—concerning her role in the authorizing of the closure of the Mississauga gas plant. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AGGREGATE RECYCLING PROMOTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROMOTION DU RECYCLAGE DES AGRÉGATS

Ms. Jones moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to prohibit certain restrictions on the use of aggregates in performing public sector construction work / Projet de loi 56, Loi interdisant certaines restrictions frappant l'utilisation d'agrégats lors de la réalisation de travaux de construction pour le secteur public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: From the preamble: Ontario residents expect the government of Ontario to take a leadership role in balancing the relationship between primary aggregate extraction and secondary aggregate recycling, the latter of which contributes to preserving the environment.

Ontario residents expect the government of Ontario and the broader public sector, including government-funded institutions, to conduct business in a sustainable way that is both operationally and economically viable.

Ontario residents also expect that, where appropriate, recycled aggregates will be fairly considered in all construction contracts entered into by the government of Ontario and the broader public sector. This allows for a better balance between the need for primary aggregate extraction and secondary aggregate recycling in Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS WEEK

Hon. Deborah Matthews: April 21 to 28 is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week in Canada. It's a time when we take the opportunity to help increase awareness of organ and tissue donation registration so we can help save more lives.

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I am delighted to be joined today by Ronnie Gavsie and Versha Prakash from the Trillium Gift of Life Network. They devote their lives to helping those who need transplants get those transplants.

It is not an overstatement to say that organ donation is a matter of life or death. A single donor can save the life of up to eight people and, through tissue donation, enhance the lives of 75 others. I'm delighted to say that in the last fiscal year, there were a record-breaking 1,009

live-saving transplants performed in Ontario, and over 1,600 tissue donors helped thousands to live healthier lives.

Yes, the numbers are slowly going up, but we have so much more work to do. The fact is, only 22% of Ontarians are registered as organ and tissue donors. We know from research that as many as one in five people mistakenly believe that they have registered consent. The old paper card that people have been carrying around in their wallets does not mean they are registered. Speaker, I'm encouraging all Ontarians to take a couple of minutes from their day and register online at beadonor.ca or in person at ServiceOntario.

Our government is helping to make it as easy as possible to register. I'm pleased to say that since February of this year, after a successful pilot, ServiceOntario is now asking all Ontarians who renew their driver's licence or obtain an Ontario photo card to register their consent to donate. This is in addition to the practice already established to ask the same of those obtaining or renewing their Ontario health card.

I'm asking MPPs and anyone watching at home to take out your health card. I know it's there. It's in your wallet; it's in your purse. Mine says "donor" on the back. If yours doesn't, I hope you're going to take the next step and register, because we all need to lead by example.

Ontario still faces an urgent challenge. The list of people waiting for a life-saving or -transforming transplant is too long. One person dies on that list every three days. Ontario's world-class hospitals have the skills, they have the knowledge, to perform medical miracles, but the people on the transplant wait-list need more of us to register our consent to become organ and tissue donors.

I've had the opportunity to see the impact of organ donation first-hand. I've met a number of organ and tissue recipients. It strikes me that they would not still be living if it were not for the generosity of a complete stranger. I've registered my consent to be an organ donor. I can tell you, it's a good feeling, knowing that even after I'm gone, I could still make a positive difference for my fellow Ontario citizens.

Over the years, we've been working with the Trillium Gift of Life Network on a number of initiatives to raise awareness and encourage more donations. Last year marked the start of a campaign that has been showing great promise. The Trillium Gift of Life Network launched the Gift of 8 movement, which refers to the fact that one donor can save up to eight lives. It's a platform that uses social media to raise more awareness by getting the word out about organ donation.

The Gift of 8 movement website has a couple of pretty neat features. First, it provides local communities across Ontario an electronic display of their donor registration data. You can learn how your community compares to others across the province, and I'd like to give a shout-out to the top communities in the province right now for their organ donor registration.

At the top of the list are the communities of Garson, Hanmer, Lively and Val Caron. All of those are

represented by the member from Nickel Belt. They've got a registration rate of 49% to 50%. Next is Parry Sound, represented by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, at 49%; and North Bay, represented by the member for Nipissing, at 47%. The member from Sudbury can take pride in his community, at 45%.

There are many communities that could do way better, and it wouldn't hurt to have a little more competition. That's why, and more importantly, the Gift of 8 movement allows individuals and organizations to create customized web pages on beadonor.ca and run their own registration campaigns through their digital and real-world networks.

Last year, I personally mounted a registration campaign on the site, and I'm challenging all MPPs to work with their constituents and start their own registration campaigns. I'm setting a new goal of registering 1,500 people to do my part to ensure that Gift of 8 becomes a movement rather than merely an initiative. This is the kind of personal involvement we need to truly mobilize Ontarians and get this conversation into the open. Organ and tissue donation is also a testament to the power of individuals and networks to make a world of difference.

You've doubtless heard of Helene Campbell, the remarkable young woman from Ottawa who last year underwent a double lung transplant in Toronto. She raised her awareness about organ donation through her tweets to high-profile celebrities. As a direct result of her efforts there was a remarkable uptick in the number of people who signed their organ donation consent form.

So let's keep that momentum going. By working hard together, by encouraging people to register their consent to donate and by sharing their wishes with their families, we can all help save lives. Ontarians are caring people. I know we can do this. I have every confidence that together we will increase those registration rates so that fewer people will have to wait to receive the transplants they need.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize National Volunteer Week. Every year during this special week we take a moment to say thank you to the more than six million volunteers who work hard to make a difference in our province. National Volunteer Week is our chance to celebrate their compassion, generosity and hard work. It's a time to honour their commitment to service.

Day in and day out, volunteers of all ages give their valuable time to make our communities stronger. They change our world as mentors, caregivers, fundraisers and board members.

Volunteering is a valued tradition in this province. It's my privilege, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to recognize our exceptional volunteers across the province and to say thank you.

Ontario's selfless volunteers make a difference. This year, close to 10,000 volunteers of all ages who are

making a difference are being recognized with Volunteer Service Awards. Since their inception, more than 170,000 Ontarians have proudly received Volunteer Service Awards. We're very proud of them.

During National Volunteer Week we also present the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism, recognizing individuals, businesses and other organizations for their outstanding volunteer contributions. Our youth are our future, and that's why young people are being recognized for their outstanding community service with the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers.

This National Volunteer Week, we also are launching our sixth annual ChangeTheWorld: Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge. Since 2008, more than 63,000 students have participated, volunteering hundreds of thousands of hours in their communities. This year we're aiming to engage more than 30,000 youth.

And that's not all. Through the partnership project, Ontario is taking concrete steps to support our strong tradition of volunteerism and to find new ways to work together for the not-for-profit sector. Volunteerism is a win-win for everyone. It helps students develop skills that can get them jobs in the future, it helps communities deliver services to the less fortunate and it helps Ontario newcomers make connections so they can acquire valuable Canadian work experience. Finally, and most importantly, volunteerism helps to make Ontario one of the best places to live on the planet.

I urge the members of the Legislature to recognize their community volunteers this week and during the Volunteer Service Awards ceremonies that are taking place in the upcoming weeks.

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Bill Walker: At moments of profound need we count on each other for compassion, kindness and generosity. This week we recognize all people whose compassion and giving spirit saved another's life. National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week is a time when we reflect on their noble acts and recognize the indelible mark they have left on the lives of countless Ontarians.

Sadly, however, the need for organ and tissue donors continues to be greater than ever before. Today, more than 1,500 Ontarians await an organ transplant. While many individuals will receive life-saving treatment, too many will pass before help arise. All of us can play a part in ending this loss of life, because it is preventable. I encourage all of us to consider becoming a donor.

People often become apprehensive when thinking about donating their organs after death. Thinking about our own mortality is uneasy, and it is difficult to plan for such an event. However, by choosing to be a donor now people can rest assured knowing that they are making the ultimate sacrifice, saving the lives of people who would not otherwise survive.

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Consider this: One organ donor can save the lives of nine transplant recipients, one tissue donor can enhance the lives of more than 50 people and one cornea donor can bring sight to two people. So, as 1,500 Ontarians continue to wait for an organ transplant in Ontario, we in the PC Party call upon everyone—all health care professionals, educators, government agencies, volunteers, community groups and private organizations—to join forces to boost the number of organ and tissue donors throughout the province.

My colleague the MPP for Northumberland–Quinte West, Rob Milligan, brought this campaign to boost organ donations to the floor of this Legislature when he introduced the Organ or Tissue Donation Statute Law Amendment Act this time last year. Likewise, leaders in education, such as the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board, have kicked off their own campaign, aimed at raising staff and student awareness about the value of organ donation under the slogan, “Don’t Take your Organs to Heaven. Heaven Knows We Need Them Here.”

I commend everyone who is doing his or her part in helping to save a life. Kindness, compassion and a giving spirit are the pillars that shape Ontario’s character. So, let’s commit to sticking to them by ensuring that every individual has access to the care and services they need. You can register now at beadonor.ca.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It’s an honour to rise on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus to respond to the minister’s statement on National Volunteer Week.

It’s a time to recognize and celebrate the incredible efforts of our volunteers. As the minister said, six million Ontarians volunteer in our province each year. In Ontario, our incredible volunteers contribute more than 860 million volunteer hours every year.

Volunteers are an important part of a healthy community. This is why I was proud to support our volunteers with my private member’s bill, the Helping Volunteers Give Back Act, which would make it easier to volunteer with multiple organizations across Ontario.

In my own riding of Dufferin–Caledon, we have an excellent spirit of volunteerism, and I want to mention two organizations specifically for all the hard work they do helping people find fulfilling volunteer opportunities. One is Volunteer MBC, or Mississauga Brampton Caledon, which does great work referring potential volunteers with placements in our community. MBC serves all ages, including youth, seniors, newcomers and groups, and provides education and support for volunteers and community service agencies.

Another great organization is Volunteer Dufferin which, like Volunteer MBC, specializes in matching people with organizations to volunteer. An online matching site, Volunteer Dufferin is part of a larger initiative to strengthen the volunteer base in Dufferin county.

National Volunteer Week is the perfect time to thank volunteers for all they do for us and in our communities. So to all our volunteers: Thank you. We cannot say enough, and appreciate your dedication and hard work.

Speaker, I must mention that this weekend you might have noticed it was a bit snowy, a bit cold and a bit rainy. On Saturday morning, there were literally hundreds of volunteers who participated in a Make Orangeville Shine program. They were out there in the snow flurries and the wind, picking up garbage to make our community better and improve it for everyone. I really have to give them a shout-out, because I’m sure it wasn’t a very pleasant Saturday morning. But they came away with a glow and an opportunity to do something special for the community. Congratulations.

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS WEEK

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add a few comments to what was already said about National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, which we are already in.

Last year, I used most of my time to brag about what Héléne Campbell had been doing with her tweets and with increasing the number of people who sign up to be a donor. I also want to highlight Mr. George Marcello, with Torch of Life, who has also brought a significant increase in the number of people who know about organ donation and know how to sign up and be a donor.

This year, I want to focus a little bit on somebody all of you know well. His name is Peter Kormos. Peter Kormos was the member from Welland, and he spent a great deal of his time here at Queen’s Park supporting what is called presumed consent. Presumed consent is another step that jurisdictions have taken; Ontario is not one of them. But he wanted Ontario to become a jurisdiction where presumed consent would become the law of the land, where basically we make it easy for everybody to be a donor. Like the minister has said and the critic has said, people in Ontario are good people. We want to help one another. We want to live by the motto of, “Don’t Take Your Organs to Heaven. Heaven Knows We Need Them Here.” That makes it even easier.

Peter had done a ton of research on the subject to look at: What are those jurisdictions who have presumed consent, and what kind of differences do we see? I have more or less taken the torch from my good friend and will try to continue pushing this concept.

There were also other pieces in there. When a child reaches 16—when a young person, really, has to go for their own health card and renew their health card, it would be a good time to add in the curriculum the fact that by signing your card, one donor can help eight lives—to do that education. For a lot of families, it is hard to talk about death, and a lot of organ donation happens during that really, really busy period when somebody passes. So make it a little bit easier by having the school curriculum talk to young people, at about age 16, about this.

I have to leave some time on the clock for my colleague, but I want to say, from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, all best wishes to Kim Cloutier. Kim Cloutier is from Elliot Lake. She's recovering from a double lung transplant right now. Our best prayers go to you.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my honour and privilege to rise to recognize the phenomenal work done by our tens of thousands of volunteers. One in particular, Janelle Brady, from Parkdale-High Park, is receiving a medal from the Lieutenant Governor, probably as we speak, so a shout-out to her as well—but also to recognize the work that's done, just to add to what has been said, by the incredible number of faith community volunteers: from our synagogues, mosques, temples and churches. People pour out their hearts and their souls and their efforts to help the marginalized, and they do this year in and year out, without a great deal of recompense—certainly no money.

Our volunteers contribute about \$45 billion into our economy every year in this province. It's an incalculable sum. We literally couldn't run the province without them. Without our volunteers, this province would simply grind to a halt. That's the reality.

Here's something we could really do for our volunteers, and that is—increasingly, they're becoming exhausted. The Out of the Cold program has a hard time recruiting, because folks simply can't keep up with the demands of the marginalized.

What we could really do, if we really respected and loved our volunteers as we should, is to have government step up and do what government should be doing. It's government's responsibility to look after the marginalized and the vulnerable. We should not leave this to the volunteers. This is our responsibility, collectively. So let's help our volunteers. Let's not leave what should be government's responsibility to the good people in our faith communities and in our institutions.

Let's provide real jobs with real pay, real benefits and real pensions, and let's step up and do what we should be doing—hopefully, in the budget.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encour-

aging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I support this, will affix my name and send it with page Jason.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: The petition is presented by members from Kagawong—again from Manitoulin Island—Gore Bay and Mindemoya.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

“Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

“Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

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“Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

“Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services.”

I agree with this petition and will present it to page Glory.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Phil McNeely: A petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Good Things Grow in Ontario.

“Whereas the agri-food industry is now, and has historically been, one of the primary economic drivers in Ontario; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario support local processors and producers in Ontario through purchasing and consuming locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables, meat and processed food products; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario farmers and Ontario food producers by leading by example; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario celebrates local Ontario producers and processors and promotes the good things grown, harvested and made in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 36, the Local Food Act."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and will send it up with Nicholas.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario;

"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs to comply with the new requirements of regulation 319/08;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process;

"Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08."

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of Pat Drysdale and other constituents in the riding of Durham, and present it to Bonnie, one of the pages.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

"Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

"Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

"Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

"Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a 'custodial' care arrangement; and

"Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

"Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

"(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

"(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

"(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait-lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to give it to Glory to be delivered to the table.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Grant Crack: A petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Good Things Grow in Ontario.

"Whereas the agri-food industry is now, and has historically been, one of the primary economic drivers in Ontario; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario support local processors and producers in Ontario through purchasing and consuming locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables, meat and processed food products; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario farmers and Ontario food producers by leading by example; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario celebrates local Ontario producers and processors and promotes the good things grown, harvested and made in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 36, the Local Food Act."

I agree with this, Mr. Speaker, and I sign it and give it to page Jarrod.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the" McGuinty-Wynne "government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I agree with this and I will be signing it.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

A thousand dogs have already died this year just because of the way they look. I certainly agree and am going to sign this and give it to Madeline to be delivered to the table.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough–Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough–Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough–Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

"Whereas the original petition from the commission included a unified Scarborough–Agincourt riding; and

"Whereas the commission's report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough–Agincourt community; and

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety, with its northern Scarborough neighbours;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough–Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough–Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401."

I fully support this petition, and I'll give it to Annie.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP) previously covered one Papanicolaou (Pap) test a year for women in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Canadian Cancer Society estimated that 1,350 Canadian women were diagnosed with cervical cancer and 390 died from the disease in 2012, and that this valuable test is a simple screening procedure that can help prevent cancer of the cervix; and

"Whereas the province through OHIP now only covers the cost of a test once every three years under new rules that took effect January 1; and

"Whereas women who want an annual Pap test now have to pay for the screening themselves under the new rules;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the OHIP funding for annual Pap tests for women in order to help prevent cervix cancer and ensure women's overall health and well-being."

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ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions I've received to do with the trades tax: "Stop the Trades Tax" petition. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

I support this petition, Mr. Speaker.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the WSIB has mandated that, effective January 1, 2013, all independent contractors and small business owners operating in the construction industry must have WSIB coverage;

"Whereas many of these business owners have their own private workplace insurance that in most cases is more affordable, more efficient and provides ... extensive coverage;

"Whereas mandatory WSIB premiums add significant costs to small businesses and adversely affect their growth prospects and in some cases their solvency;

"Whereas the government provided minimum notice about the change to businesses, with WSIB sending out an official letter dated November 25, 2012;

"Whereas, at a time when Ontario is facing a jobs crisis with 600,000 people unemployed, the government and its agencies should not be discouraging private sector job creation and growth by levying additional, unnecessary costs;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the Minister of Labour to issue an order in council eliminating the requirement that mandates compulsory WSIB coverage on all independent contractors and small business owners in the construction industry."

I agree with this petition and I sign my name to it.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm presenting a petition on behalf of the residents of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and...

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers...;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I'll affix my name.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Toby Barrett: Signatures keep coming in, Speaker, from farm dealerships—all the farm dealerships, now—in my riding.

"Stop the Tire Tax Hikes.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for farm and construction tires;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas Ontario's opposition has proposed a plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Suspend the hikes to Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on farm and off-the-road tires pending proposals to lower costs."

I sign my name to these petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 18, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 /
Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm so happy that I have an opportunity to finish speaking to this bill. Agriculture is very important to many of the communities and many in Algoma-Manitoulin.

When we first saw this bill in 2012, Local Food Week was designated to be the week after the long weekend. When this plan was created, there was obviously no consultation with farmers, and no foresight by the ministry, as this week coincides with farmers planting their crops. Anyone with any knowledge of farming would have enough foresight to know that this would mean we could not have ensured an abundance of local food, which the week intends to celebrate.

For the government's second kick at the can, the ministry had time to think about these implications but still picked a week that is not ideal. The government would like to make Local Food Week the same week as Agriculture Week. This just goes to show how out of touch this government is. The government had the opportunity to show rural and northern Ontario that they are listening to their needs. Why don't Local Food Week and Agriculture Week deserve their separate weeks? I would think that if the government is serious about making local food a priority, a separate week would have been chosen.

To even think that local food is the only issue that farmers care about is misguided and uninformed. There are many other concerns farmers have that do not include local foods. Just to name a few of these concerns, to remind the government they exist, how about cumbersome legislation; food processing standards; funding for crop risk management; and the increasing price of eco fees on farming equipment?

This bill then goes on to stipulate that the ministry publish, at least every three years, a summary of provincial local food initiatives, and highlight successes and innovations in the broader public sector and elsewhere. It makes sense for the ministry to publish a summary of provincial local food initiatives and highlight success stories, but there is no reason why this report should only come out once every three years.

The report must include ministerial and public institution achievements in the increase in local food awareness. We need safeguards in place to ensure that it includes a fair and honest assessment of how the ministry is succeeding or failing in attempts to increase the utilization of local food in Ontario.

This bill needs to go much further, not only for the sake of local farmers but also to give our communities what they deserve. I am not the only voice who feels this way about this bill. Even the leaders in the academic world have spoken out about this bill. University of Guelph Professor Evan Fraser told the CBC on March 26 that the Local Food Act "is a foundational stone that will be made more concrete in subsequent years, but right now it sounds pretty aspirational." Professor Fraser acknowledges that this legislation is a stepping stone, but even he can tell that this bill does not set out to achieve

real results. It just aspires to do that one day, if and when the government feels like it.

Or should the government always aspire to make suitable legislation on the first try? This should be about quality, not about putting something through with a nice-sounding title, with no meat on the bones.

This government needs to show real commitment to farming. After all, Ontario is home to Canada's largest food processing sector. It's time we give this sector the attention it rightfully deserves. The Ontario agri-food sector contributes more than \$34 billion to the economy and employs more than 700,000 people. This sector stands to grow if it gets the proper supports.

It's time to create real initiatives to buy local. The act requires Ontario ministries to buy local food, but does not include quotas or legislated requirements for the amount of local food sold or bought by retailers or institutions, such as schools and hospitals. Quotas should not be avoided. They are real, tangible numbers that provide security to the industry.

The number of farmers across Ontario is falling. If we are going to have a sustainable local food production industry, we need to do more to make farming a viable and attractive career option for young people. We need to do something about the falling numbers of farmers, in order to address the problem of food security.

When people buy local, it helps local economies. This is a simple step to ensuring that local and small-scale farmers stay in business and help the local economy, while improving food security in our province. All of these factors working together are important pieces of the puzzle.

1400

Many farmers have been forced out of all forms of markets, which affects access to a diverse selection of local foods. When a local agriculture economy suffers, farmers turn to cash crops such as corn and soya beans, which have had bad consequences in rural communities as they lose access to locally grown produce.

The government should make it easier for young people to pursue careers in farming, and be looking at creating a new apprenticeship program for young people to develop skills they need for a successful farming career. They should also be working with farmer organizations to support succession planning of farms between generations and providing rural employers with a training tax credit to help them train employees for a future in agriculture.

The truth is that the future of farming is important to every Ontarian. We need to plan for the future. We need to ensure that the future generation of farmers is supported and trained so that we have food security for the future of all Ontarians.

The New Democratic Party has proposed a buy-Ontario commitment which will make it the law that Ontario's money is spent here in Ontario, which will encourage food processors to purchase local foods.

The Ontario Market Investment Fund needs to be expanded to invest in local supply chains, including

regional food hubs, to link farmers directly with processors, restaurants and consumers. The more marketing and promotion and help we give these farmers, the better it helps local economies. These small producers need support in these areas and cannot be expected to do this alone.

Something that I believe strongly in is manufacturing raw resources right here in our province. As in mining, I feel no differently about the agricultural sector. These are our resources, our food, and should be our choices. The government can support these initiatives by providing relief from municipal taxation and zoning restrictions to encourage on-farm processing.

If the government is set on supporting these industries and increasing marketing practices and making it easier for them to get their products on the shelves, we need to see a clear plan on how this will be achieved. Every dollar of sale in the agricultural sector generates an extra \$2.40 in sales in the local economy. If you needed a stronger economic argument on why we need to support this sector, I truly don't know of one.

We know that the evidence says that people are more likely to meet dietary recommendations when they have ready access to grocery stores with healthy and affordable food, as opposed to convenience stores that offer mostly packaged processed foods. How much closer to home can you get than local food? These producers are solutions to the problem.

I know many in my communities in Algoma-Manitoulin are watching this bill with great hopes, people like Ted, Errol, Glen, Katherine, Ross, Mike, Laura, Gail, Mark and many, many more. They support the 40-plus local producers that Algoma-Manitoulin so proudly has, and attend local farmers' markets across the North Shore and on St. Joseph and Manitoulin Islands. Let's take the opportunity to grow this industry and bring out even more people to access local healthy foods.

Northern Ontario is not only a leader in the primary sector industries; it is positioning itself to become a knowledge-based economy, building on its traditions and strength and expanding in the areas of innovation and collaboration. Northern agriculture is important to the health, the economic viability and to the diversity of northern communities. The north is an emerging player in the agricultural sector, and the sector needs to continue to be supported so that communities can look to sources of foods and fibres close to home.

This bill is indeed a step in the right direction, but we can do much, much more if we want to make a difference for the health of our community members, the livelihood of our farmers, and the future of all Ontarians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a privilege talking to this because it is truly an exciting opportunity here that we cannot let go by.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to congratulate and thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his excellent remarks. I'm still confused somewhat as to why the

members of the opposition and the third party continue to believe—and lead people to believe—that Agricultural Week cannot be in the same week as Local Food Week. It completely boggles my mind, because to me they go hand in hand. We're encouraging the people who live in our urban areas to support our local farming community and, to me, what better way to do that than to have both in the same week?

He also talked about the professor from the University of Guelph who said this is a foundational stone, and I agree. That's what this bill is all about: continuing the progress we've made in the past with regard to promoting consumption of local food here in Ontario.

I'm not going to use this prop, but I am actually proud of all the local retailers in the Metro flyer this week, with my picture in four different spots, celebrating with the people who do good things in our major retail chains across the province of Ontario. They are working hard. They're working hard at promoting the Local Food Act component and encouraging people, and we're supporting them in doing so.

We do not need to have legislation that forces people in Ontario to buy a certain type of food. That's not the country I live in. That's not the province I live in, where we're going to tell people that they have to buy a certain amount of this particular kind of food. That type of suggestion is just completely wrong-headed. That's why we have not legislated targets in this particular bill; we do not want to compromise our trade obligations.

I look forward to speaking more in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I rise to add comment to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. He raises some good points. I come from the agriculture field, and I certainly know—even the ministry, I think, is aware—that there's a difference between agriculture and food, and that's why they segregate it.

I know this government forgot about the food part, and they had to go back. Once they were reminded that there is an extra ministry and staff around that, they did rectify it. But it just went to show how little this government pays attention to rural issues. The next step was not knowing about Agriculture Week. I can't explain how else you could re-designate it as food week. The tire tax: After promising to consult with rural stakeholders, they blindsided them with this latest eco tax—a tax is a tax with this government.

We see time and time again that this government has not consulted with the agriculture community, or they would have let them know about Agriculture Week and Local Food Week being the same. It's unfortunate that the government wouldn't have somebody on their staff who would know that and correct the Premier before she let that go, because it is a bit of a gaffe and a bit of an embarrassment, I'm sure, for the ministry.

Agriculture is very important. It's our second-largest industry in this province, and it needs some help and a bit of work with this government that they haven't seen over

the last eight or nine years. I know our critic, Ernie Hardeman, was a big part of the local program for insurance, and they were very appreciative about that, but I think we want to see more from this government. Maybe we will, but hopefully they'll consult with stakeholders in the future and get the next program right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to be able to stand and raise my voice on G36 and to add comments to my colleague's speech on it. I know that in my riding we have farmers' markets that are doing just this; they're making sure that people are able to get local food, and we're promoting that on a regular basis.

I know that we have a wonderful Hamilton market downtown in our city. There's a lot of local food in there, and there are other foods that come from other countries, and people enjoy the benefits. Nobody is ever saying that we don't want to enjoy the benefits of other countries, but we need to ensure that we do have enough local food that people will be able to take part in that.

We have the Victory Gardens in Hamilton. We're constantly growing beds of gardens, and the community helps take care of those gardens to ensure that everybody has the ability to have fresh fruits and vegetables.

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I've been working on an initiative, in my riding, of aquaponics, working with the city of Hamilton trying to make sure that we can have an aquaponic facility in our city that will be a not-for-profit and be able to grow fresh tilapia and vegetables. It'll be a not-for-profit, so we will be feeding the local food banks at the same time. That will create jobs, it will create initiative and it will create community partners. We're all very excited about the project and looking forward to it coming to fruition.

But like I said, we're all supportive of other countries bringing in—it's not about the free and fair trade; it's about making sure that we're supporting our local farmers. I really am looking forward to this getting to committee so that we can discuss those issues further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to again speak on this bill and this important industry that we have in Ontario. We have so many people that work so hard to get things done. In my own area, we have a dairy farmer who went into the wine business, the Perrault winery in Navan. It's four jobs, five jobs for the local economy. It could be more if he could get better access to the market. He loses probably four or five months a year because of access to his farm, but he's a very successful winery.

We have Cleroux, along the Navan Road, who supplied fresh fruits and vegetables to the market in Ottawa and to local people for 40 or 50 years. We have to encourage them. We see some discussion about the market, that it has to be invigorated for these—but it's a great attraction in Ottawa, and all the fresh foods. The superstore in Orléans has a lot of programs to get the percentage of local produce that they sell. They monitor

it, and they've been doing an excellent job. So we've got a lot of partners in this. I think we have to strengthen our partners.

The minister was down in our area last year and brought all the local food producers together. How can we improve their businesses? They are tough businesses, but certainly something we have to continue right across the province. If you've seen the way they produce tomatoes in Florida, they take them along in these gravel trucks; that's the same type of truck we get gravel in, about three or four feet deep. The tomatoes are designed so that they're hard enough to truck like gravel. They're all green and by the time they get up here they're nice and red, but there's no taste to them. So we've got to get more local food. It's good for us; it's good for the kids; it's good for the economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I think the member from Ottawa-Orléans has just hit it right on, looking at local initiatives. I'm so happy that you have that opportunity and have developed those opportunities in your area. We need to share that across the province. It's not protectionist measures; it's doing what's right for your local economy. You're absolutely right. I would expect you to share those comments with the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, who really doesn't understand the difference between the two days. You should talk to a farmer and maybe you'll be able to understand as far as what it means promoting foods and promoting other agricultural venues.

The member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry: I agree with you and I'm glad you highlighted that stuff, the problematic legislation that is there and the processing standards that are very much a challenge for the farming communities.

My colleague from Hamilton Mountain: What more of an initiative do we not want to give to our youth and some of our supportive community members by providing them with an incentive to creating life, by creating programs that are there, by getting them excited about getting into the agriculture sector and by telling them how dynamic it is and what the purpose is? It's not just a job; it really is a lifestyle. But if those supports, if those programs, if those incentives are not there to excite those kids and that we get them early, while they're in school—we're talking about doing the same thing with our tradesmen, but let's do the same thing with our agricultural sector. If you do that, then you lay the seed, no pun intended. If you do that early, while they're there, you will create a sense of pride in a child, where he puts a seed in water, watches it germinate and sees it grow. And you know what? When he pulls it and cultivates it, cooks it and feeds it, you will not lose on that opportunity. It's a wonderful, fantastic feeling, and I would just encourage the member to really look at this as far as what the potential is with this bill. Let's get it right. Let's get it into committee. I'm very excited about this, and I look forward to having many, many more discussions about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to rise today and to speak about the local food bill. This is a wonderful bill, and I think it's a bill that pays tribute to all the farmers in Ontario. When I was brought up, there were a lot of farmers around my little community of Kiamika. Every farmer had their farm animals, but they also all had a big garden.

We were not living on a farm, but we had our garden at home. Like the previous speaker was saying, in the spring and the beginning of summer, my dad and my siblings and I were preparing the garden. We were learning that food does not grow in a store, but food grows in the garden. It was a wonderful experience for us. Also, yes, we were all excited to go and see the garden coming about and, later on in the summer, picking up our own vegetables, cooking them and having a lot of pleasure eating these wonderful and very tasty meals.

If passed, the local food bill will support, promote and celebrate the good things that are grown and made in Ontario. We want residents of Ontario to be able to eat local food at home, in restaurants, at work, in schools and wherever they are. Growing and making food creates jobs and economic growth in Ontario.

People are shocked when I tell them that the agri-food industry is the second-largest industry in Ontario and also that it does create jobs. It contributes \$34 billion to our economy. They are shocked. They think that most of the food comes from Mexico or the southern part of the United States, but no, it's a great and very lucrative industry in Canada and in Ontario. Also, the agri-food industry supports more than 700,000 jobs across the province. But it has another ripple effect: the food processing sector also creates jobs. More than 94,000 people are working in our 3,000 manufacturing businesses in Ontario and contribute almost \$10 billion to our GDP, so it's impressive.

As an MPP who has two very excellent farmers' markets in my area—everybody knows when they come to Ottawa that the best place to go is to the farmers' market in downtown Ottawa. You have a good farmers' market, and around that you have wonderful restaurants. Most of the restaurants around are buying their fruits and vegetables and often also their meat from the market.

We have the wonderful maple sugar industry. This is also part of the agri-food industry in Ontario. It's the right time. It was one of the best seasons, this season. I have two of my family who have sugar bushes. Those of you who have tasted les sous-produits de l'érablière de ma soeur—it's wonderful. So I wanted again to say what a wonderful industry it is.

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In our area—and I want to pay tribute to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. He's a great representative of his riding. He's very proud of his riding. In his riding he also talked about all the good families who have been working in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who have been established there since the turn of the century.

The farm goes from father to son and to grandson, and it's nice to see that. These farms sometimes change the products that they have on their farm. Some of them now have wineries, or they produce their own beer, or they have their sugar bush, or they also have—all the farmers got together at one point at the turn of the century to open the St-Albert cheese factory. All of this is helping to develop a very lucrative industry in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Also in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, you have the Guelph campus in Alfred. It's an agricultural school. It contributes to form all these sons and daughters who have chosen to continue the family business, the farming business in the area.

So this bill is a very positive bill. Of course, there have been suggestions here in this House that we may amend it or want something different in the bill. That's why we want to quickly bring this bill to committee and all the good ideas that you can provide to improve the bill. That is a good process to make sure that when we will vote on this bill, we have one of the best bills in Canada, if it's not the best. There is always a possibility to strengthen the bill, and our intent is to support, promote and celebrate the good things that are grown and made in Ontario. I know that you all have your own ideas how we can improve and strengthen the bill.

The proposed bill, if passed, combined with the non-legislative elements, will take Ontario a long way to achieving that goal. If passed, the bill will support, promote and celebrate food grown and made in Ontario. I think it's the responsibility of all of us to make sure that when we buy food at the store or at the farmers' market, we check: Is it grown in Ontario? Where does it come from? Because we know that in Ontario we have good food and that it's safe food to eat also, which is very, very important. In this bill, we didn't just want to support our farmers; we wanted to increase the sale of local food. By having this week to celebrate, we will be able to celebrate and educate the public about what is grown here in Ontario.

The member from Hamilton was talking about the community gardens. That's another area where, for those people who live in town and don't have a backyard to grow a garden like we had when we were young, now there are these community gardens. It's another way, also, to be able to bring local food to the table.

But the objective of this bill is to increase the sales of local food. We want local food to be available wherever Ontario residents eat in the province: at home, in restaurants, in schools and in hospitals. I know that some of the restaurants are very proud of themselves, and they are advertising that all the food that is served in their restaurant is local food.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: As most people in this House will know—and those listening at home—Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is the beef capital of Ontario, and in fact Canada. Agriculture has been, is, and always will be the backbone

of our local economy. We are always proud to say that if agricultural industry is doing well, we're all doing well.

We all know that our food does not just show up in the grocery store. It is grown in those local areas. It is something that our farmers take great pride in, in the safety and production of a quality product and bringing it to market for all of us. Of course, at the very extent of it, we would support anything that's going to promote locally grown food.

However, this bill does not address the challenges farmers are facing. This bill does nothing to address such things as the red tape and the regulation; the increasing hydro costs for our farmers; the small abattoirs closing across rural Ontario; the destruction of the horse racing industry; and, most recently, the Ontario Tire Stewardship, which actually penalized and was very punitive to the agricultural and farming community.

It's very interesting that this bill would be introduced with great fanfare that they're the saviour of agriculture and they're going to be the ones that are going to drive it, despite only making a part-time commitment to this very, very, very significant industry in our great province of Ontario.

It kind of is a tough one for me to say too much positive, because I think there's just a lot of nothing in this bill, which doesn't really do it. I'm told that ag groups provided much input. However, the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals ignored it and instead tabled this bill, which is virtually a fair bit of fluff and not a whole lot that, as I said earlier, is really going to help address the challenges that our farmers face.

If you were serious—if the Liberals across the floor were serious about this bill, we would have hoped that they would have taken some points from the white paper drafted by our member from Oxford, a former Minister of Agriculture, who is well respected and well regarded across the industry. Regardless of where we go with him in an agricultural setting, people come up to him and look to him for his advice and his comment on what the current government is doing. So I hope they'll take time to reach out and speak to him and improve this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand up and join the debate this afternoon. I listened to the remarks by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

We obviously are going to support this bill. Local food is important. Supporting Ontario farmers is important, from an economic perspective. Obviously, we're in good fortune that we have land we can grow food on in Ontario, and we need to protect that. For all those reasons, New Democrats will support this bill.

However, the minister's remarks that it's our responsibility as consumers to check where our food is grown, at our markets and so forth—sure, that's fine. But there has to be—we're here in a Legislature to, hopefully, bring forth legislation that will influence public policy here, and that's what's missing in this bill.

We have a week, Local Food Week, and that's what we're counting on to change our food system in Ontario?

This is just barely the tip of the iceberg. We have so much further that we need to go. It's like if we had a week called Ontario jobs week, and that was our jobs plan for Ontario; or Ontario anti-bullying week, which I think we have now, and we assume that's going to solve bullying problems in this province; or health week—instead of hospitals, we just have a health week.

That's not how you do things. That's not what makes sense here. I think there's so much more that we need to do. I've put these suggestions on the record before, but unfortunately the health minister just left. I thought that while we had our current—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You can't mention the absence of any member.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I apologize; sorry. I did not mean that in any way.

While some of these cabinet ministers are here—we have a budget date now, May 2, and we have food budgets coming off the table. We have a government that has cut off people's special-diet benefits in this province. Could you please respond to that? Because money that low-income people make is all spent locally. It's all spent locally in Ontario, so I'd like to see if we're going to see any progress on that issue here.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to make one thing very, very clear: We on this side of the House are not pretending to try to be the saviours of farmers or agriculture. If someone wants to cast themselves in the role of saviour, you can do it over there. Our farmers don't need salvation—at least in that sense. They're hard-working folk there who, frankly, every single day, take all of the risks to lay on our table the best-tasting, most nutritious and safest food in the world. There's no messiah complex over here about what farmers need. We're quite satisfied that farmers know what they need. They know how to go about doing the job that they need to do, and they do it very, very well.

This is about celebrating farmers. From my perspective, picking up on my social worker friend on the other side, it's about making every day food day in Ontario. That would be ideal. And by the way, my riding is number one for veal per capita and number one for Christmas trees per capita too; I just want to put that on the record.

We're committed to working with groups. You can say, "Well, they're aspirational goals, and gosh golly gee, ain't that awful? Why don't you be regulatory and put it all down on paper so it's all fixed, and all the reporting"—and had we done that, the official opposition would have been all over us like a wet blanket, saying, "No, no, don't be regulatory; we want to cut red tape."

Well, you know what? We're prepared to work with groups because we understand and we've heard from many, many folk that everyone would prefer to arrive together rather than to be driven anywhere. You're talking about agricultural education and standing with groups: The first thing you've got to do is sit down and

be willing to work with them. This bill allows us to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question or comment?

I return to the Minister for Community Safety and francophone affairs for her reply.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, if some people have good ideas—this bill was drafted after five large consultations and hearing from the farmers, from the producers and from the manufacturing side of this industry. This bill was put together after listening to all of those people, but there is always a place to improve the bill. At the committee, that's the time to improve the bill, and we welcome that.

I want again to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture and Food for bringing this bill to the House. But in the few minutes that I have, I want again to talk about la Fromagerie St-Albert. La Fromagerie St-Albert is five generations of farmers and craftsmen that have worked to develop—it's a co-op; a very nice model. It's owned by more than 50 producers in the Glengarry-Prescott-Russell area. Early this year, they had the misfortune of having a big fire which destroyed their factory. I admire these people because instead of saying, "Government, come to us. Give us money. We need to rebuild," the next day, within 24 hours, the CEO of St-Albert went on camera and said, "We are going to rebuild. We're not going to let this bring"—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The whole community came together.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: All the community, yes, came together, and all the other cheese factories around came together also, not to compete, but to support them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to discuss Bill 36 in the House. There are a couple of comments I want to make. It's good to see the Attorney General is here, because I know that when we were debating this in the past, I made some comments regarding certain industries as they relate to food and agriculture. I think he was kind of surprised at the issues I was dealing with.

All you have to do is go back to my younger days when Baba was around, and the garden she had and everything she produced there. It's much the same as driving up Glenora Road with the Mennonites who are up there. When you go by there, they've got all the food that's prepared there. But quite frankly, some of the nutritional things that are required to be labelled and all these things to ensure that individuals providing those homegrown services right in Ontario comply with the guidelines and the needs that are out there, get a little bit difficult.

Some of the other stuff, though, is when you ask some of the youth of today what's happening out there and where the food comes from. Well, a lot of kids in school today will say, "Well, it comes from the factory." You know, they need to gain an understanding of what

happens and how these things come to be, to be able to provide these foods for us.

I did quite a bit of research on the weekend in a number of locations, trying to dig up things I want to talk about. But the legislation specifically states:

"The purposes of this act are as follows:

"1. To foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario"—and I want to get into some of those economies and systems.

"2. To increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food"—and that's one of the key things that I want to talk about.

"3. To encourage the development of new markets for local food."

I do have some concerns with a lot of the promotion of the growth aspect of the retail side; you know, it's kind of a push-and-pull strategy. I think we need some of that retail initiative in order to be able to assist. I can tell you that last year, for example, I tried to work with my sons, Josh and Garrett, who wanted to retail some of the products that I'll talk about—wild leeks. You want to know something? You try to talk to some of these retail chains, and you've got to go through central office and talk to the warehouse about any of that stuff, because there wasn't an incentive to promote those sorts of things.

Now in Oshawa, we've got a number of things. In the north end at the Legends Centre, we've got the farmers' market that starts on May 19; it's the third year. And the North Oshawa Farmers' Market that runs at the Oshawa Centre has been going on since 1959 and runs from May till October. Not only that, we've also got the Downtown Oshawa Farmers' Market beside the old Regent Theatre on Tuesdays from 11 to 4:30.

Being an urban member from Oshawa, basically the urban part of Oshawa, there are a couple of small farms in there. We have Glaspell's on Townline Road, who raise prize-winning sheep and have an outstanding dairy operation; and the Werry farm on Harmony Road North, as well as Werrcroft Farms on Ritson Road and their outstanding Holsteins. There's a number of things.

Now, what I wanted to get to was what the Attorney General was talking about. I know that one minister mentioned some of the aspects; for one thing, about maple syrup. She spoke about maple syrup. It's really hard to find data. I found some data—I'm sure the government has not even seen this report, because it's dated and there has not been an update on this particular report. But it talks about 80% of the maple syrup in Ontario is sold at the sugar bush or in local stores. So, when you go by the St. Lawrence Market on the weekend, there are all kinds for maple syrup for sale there. It's the same at the small sugar bush operators locally—Purple Woods, with CLOCA, the local conservation authority, retails it up there.

But about two thirds of the maple syrup sold in Ontario is imported from Quebec. Now, that's the difficulty. We have great producers out there, but there really isn't an organized market to be able to retail those sorts of

aspects. Of the total Canadian production of maple syrup, 90% is exported to more than 25 countries, and a majority of that goes to the United States. Now, the export market in that particular area reached \$108.6 million, but this basically goes back to 1999 data, because there hasn't been an update on any of that information that has been brought forward, which is about 23,447 tonnes of maple syrup that's retailed. On top of that, the States gets 89% of the exports from Ontario—from Canada—in maple syrup alone, with Europe only getting 5% and Asia getting another 5%.

Now, back in 2008, I had the privilege and honour to take our kids to Egypt. Quite frankly, one of the things I always do is check the local markets and see what they're retailing. Well, it was great and wonderful that they had maple syrup there, but they were promoting the fact it was 10% real maple syrup in the syrup they were providing.

Think of the opportunities and the ability to expand that market throughout world markets. Right now, a lot of us just look to the States, when there's huge demand in a lot of other countries around the world where we can retail these sorts of things.

Most people don't realize that in Canada the maple syrup industry is surpassed only by frozen French fries—most people in agricultural commodities don't realize that—according to the report of bygone days, because it hasn't been updated.

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Now, there's another industry I wanted to talk about, which is very interesting as well. Quite frankly, in the time frames that we have, it's difficult to try to get all the information that we have out there. Most people don't realize that Canada is the primary supplier of wild and cultivated blueberries for the United States. In 1998, there were 7,454 tonnes of wild blueberries from Canada that were shipped into the States, which represented about 99.5% of that market that goes to the States. But the difficulty with that is that there's not a lot of export going to other locations. We're looking at new locations, and when the US economy is on a downturn, it's very, very difficult to try to find new markets. We need to open those markets now to ensure that those sales—and, quite frankly, if you drive around, if you look at most of the places where a lot of the wild blueberries are retailed, they're at side stands and everything else where people can pick them up.

Here's another one that the Attorney General may find very interesting. This is 1997 data because it hasn't been updated since then. The demand for wild mushrooms—the world demand is basically a \$900-million industry. Some of the other things with wild mushrooms that people may find—it's very hard to find data on this sort of stuff. However, the total earnings for wild mushroom harvesting—and it was difficult because there is no data that was collected for Ontario. But in northern Saskatchewan—can you imagine this, Attorney General?—in 1996, wild mushroom harvesters were making, on average, \$300,000 a year. These are the sorts of things that we have to look at; we have to look outside the box.

In the past, I was kind of throwing some tidbits out there about these sort of things that we were talking about, whether it was the maple syrup and the wild mushrooms and all those other things. But now I'm trying to give you some actual factual data of what is potentially available out there and some of the things that we have to look at because, as I stated earlier on, this includes the diversity of local food in establishing new systems and new economies. Guess what? Here's some opportunities that are out there that people never really thought about that, if we looked at them, we may have the opportunity to expand on some of those things.

There's a great number of other things that are utilized in the province of Ontario that most people don't realize are even there, like the inner bark on the eastern white pine. Can you imagine this? We're talking about eastern white pine trees—a volatile oil that's used in inhalants. Not only that, but the bark in black cherry is used in cough syrup. There are all sorts of things. At one time, willow—the bark from a willow tree—was used in aspen, or Aspirin; sorry. Aspen is a form of a tree.

These are the sorts of things that—if we start doing the research out there—Ontario has to offer. If we're looking at new diversities and new systems that could be developed out there, there is a vast amount of information that could be utilized that, quite frankly, we could become a world leader in because nobody is jumping on the bandwagon. Here I am giving you the opportunity. I'm probably the only one, although the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, from up Manitoulin way, would certainly see a lot of the blueberries that take place.

One of the other things that I wanted to talk about—I was really kind of hoping for a significant amount more time because there was a lot of things I wanted to bring to the attention—was wild rice, for example. Most people don't realize that Canada, as a whole, produces 1.1 million kilograms of wild rice. Most of that, though, unfortunately, comes out of Saskatchewan. There are huge opportunities for a lot of wild rice demands throughout the world.

One other area—and I'm running out of time, so I'm trying to get as many as I can in—is the new Canadian tea market. Most people don't realize that we have a great opportunity, and from the Far North the First Nations communities have something called Labrador tea. It's a plant that grows in northern Ontario, and the First Nations community utilizes it quite extensively. But the Canadian tea market has been estimated at over \$390 million, based on 1997 data.

I think the thing I'm trying to point out here, Speaker, in the time I've been allocated—there's a lot more things that I could go on in details about, but I'm trying to bring something a little bit different to the table on ways that we can look at how we can make and be a leader around the world on some of the things that a lot of people really never thought about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add my comments to the member from Oshawa's speech. I'm going

to ask him a question. I appreciate how much he condensed into his 10 minutes. I'm up next with my 10 minutes, so you've given me a good gauge of what I should focus on, because there is certainly a lot of information when it comes to food production, not only in this province, but across the country. He mentioned right from the outset of his speech the barriers to the retail side that I think his sons were attempting to get into with wild leeks. I'd like to give him the opportunity to expand on that, because I think it's an important thing when our primary producers are putting out wonderful products, innovative products and healthy products, yet are faced with corporate conglomerates that put up big walls to gaining access to those markets, whether they be on a provincial or regional basis. I'm going to hope that he addresses that in the two minutes that he can.

Otherwise, he certainly enlightened us to the variety and expansive nature of agriculture production and food production in this province and how important it is for us to understand it and to understand the diversity, not only the diversity in products and the economy, but ecology as well. Let's remember that wild blueberry production feeds an ecology in northern Ontario that allows significant wildlife to flourish in that area. Not only is it an economical and nutritional benefit, but an environmental benefit that we should also be promoting in the context of food and agriculture and our natural resources.

I'm really happy that he highlighted those issues. I didn't know the size of our wild mushroom market. It's quite enormous and it makes me hungry, frankly, to try to experience all of that wonderful, bountiful produce that we have at our disposal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to rise to speak about Bill 36, with respect to the Local Food Act. As a member from Toronto, an urban centre, there is no better place to talk about food, because we know that we need to work with our rural neighbours. This particular piece of legislation will address a very important industry that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has talked about, the fact that this particular food industry represents about \$55 billion. That's a lot of money for farmers, for processors, for distributors, retailers, restaurateurs—the entire food service operators.

But most importantly, this is a growing sector that our government has consistently supported through different kinds of legislation but, more importantly, through our activities in consulting with the farmers. As much as the opposition and third party said, "They haven't consulted," let me correct the record. I do want to recognize the opposition and the third party. The members from Algoma-Manitoulin, Davenport and Essex talked earlier about how this is a first step. I believe this is the first of many steps. One piece of legislation alone cannot address all the issues we have identified here as we debate this particular legislation.

More importantly, coming from an urban centre like my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, we value and

appreciate, with regard to this legislation, that it helps us to promote, educate and, at the same time, appreciate the importance of a very large group of sectors, the farmers. I know that the young people in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt this past summer had an opportunity to visit a farm just outside of Scarborough and really enjoyed it. That's why through this legislation we'll have more opportunities to address this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's great to stand in the chamber today discussing food. One of my favourite pastimes is indulging in eating. There have been some very good points that have arisen here this afternoon, and I think the member from Oshawa has done a fantastic job in pointing out some of the shortcomings of what this bill is and represents. A lot of what we need to do is to tackle these issues of the barriers that are preventing the great produce and products that we in rural Ontario grow and raise to market. I want to thank the member for Oshawa for making those points very clear. It's nice to know that we have members in the chamber here who do their homework when it comes to such an issue as this.

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Being a beef producer myself, and also a grains producer, this is an area that I obviously have a vested interest in, both from, I guess you could say, a spiritual side of things, working on the land and getting back to nature, but also in taking pride in producing high-quality food items that go to the grocery stores here in Toronto and the other regions.

This bill definitely is lacking in what we need. I'll be talking about it during my 10 minutes later today or at the earliest convenience that I'm able to.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: Once again, I'm happy to stand to this debate.

I've been listening to the members and different statements that have been made. The member from Scarborough-Agincourt stated that other members of this House said that this is a first step, and that nobody's been consulted, and that these are the things that are being said on this side. Well, if true stakeholders had been consulted, we probably wouldn't have the week of agriculture day and food day on the exact same days. These are things that just show us that we need further consultation, that things need to be talked over with stakeholders.

One of the concerns on this side of the House is that the minister has the ability to establish goals or targets to aspire to, an ability to establish targets for specific public sector partners. You know, it would be really nice to see actual targets placed into this bill already and not just something that will come back in three years, and then she'll be able to look at targets.

When they say that we're questioning the whole bill, well, of course we are. First of all, that's our job to do,

and secondly, this is a Liberal pat-on-the-head bill. This is a bunch of fuzzy, warm, hugging, kissing, let's-get-together bill that—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Sometimes that's okay.

Miss Monique Taylor: Sure, sometimes it's okay to have that. But when we're in a minority situation, we should be able to get actual things done. It's not just that the Liberals always know best. There are other members of this House who do have the majority of this House, and we should be working together to make sure that we do have good, sustainable bills happening right along. We've been putting forward ideas, and we're looking forward to getting it to committee. That's why we're allowing it to pass to committee, so that we can make sure there are things in here that are really going to do things for our agriculture.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Fiddleheads.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments, so I return to the member for Oshawa for his reply.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the comments from the members from Hamilton Mountain, Northumberland—Quinte West, Scarborough—Agincourt and Essex.

The Attorney General was asking: What are the ideas? I think I put significant new ideas on the table during this discussion that really haven't come forward before, although the Minister of Correctional Services did speak about maple syrup and her ties with that. But we need to advance that so we can get that further.

One of the problems with maple syrup is some of the regulation that comes in under the maple syrup act. One of the service providers was essentially shut down because of a lack of assistance. I'm not saying it's anyone's fault; it's just the way the operation—I think there were 1,000 or 2,000 trees.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You want more subsidies for them.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: No, not necessarily. They wanted guidance and direction to make sure what they were doing was in the fashion that would be acceptable—except they were harassed to the point where they shut down.

The member from Essex spoke about wild leeks. I can tell you that what we tried to do was, we went to a number of food providers out there, and none of them were interested at all. We all had to go through the big office, the head office, through the warehouse, through distribution. Effectively, that meant that you go from here to there, and then if they ship it in, then guess what? It can be a local commodity. I don't see anything in here or out there where it says that the local farmer, the Werrys down the road, can be able to sell and retail unless it's a small mom-and-pop operation. Some of the big conglomerates where most of the retail goods are sold don't have opportunities to bring that in. You've got to go through central distribution.

Some of the other stuff, in the time remaining: I did go down to St. Lawrence Market to try to check and find out

the opportunities that are there. One of the difficulties is that the wild leeks are just one small opportunity, but it's such a narrow window of opportunity to retail them that basically you have to get a table for a whole year for a three- or four-week or maybe a month period of time to retail them, and it's not cost-effective to do that. Besides, you have to go on a waiting list to do that. Fiddleheads, as the Attorney General was mentioning, at the St. Lawrence Market were actually being retailed for \$20 a pound, just to give people a perspective of what is available out there.

There are a lot more things that hopefully we can discuss.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I am really honoured, actually, to have some time today to address agriculture in the province of Ontario under the guise of the Local Food Act, G36, which is a reintroduction of an act.

From the outset, I would like to talk about my riding, Essex county. For those of you in this chamber who aren't familiar with Essex county, it is home to some of the most fertile soil in the province. Some of the numbers we have: As of 2006, you may or may not know that 47% of Ontario's total greenhouse production—47%; that equals 5,494,164 square metres of greenhouse production—is encompassed and is housed in Essex county, mainly in Leamington and Kingsville, which also represents a huge amount of tomato production. Therefore, the Heinz tomato cannery is located in Leamington. Production equals more production on the value-added side in terms of processing at the Heinz facility, and then it equals consumption, as well, because we all know this country makes a mean ketchup. That's a wonderful connection between our agriculture food chain and production and our local economies.

That's all at risk, and much more, if not only provincial governments but federal governments don't start taking agriculture production seriously in this province. This is why we have to look at Bill 36 as not even coming nearly close to addressing those issues.

What it does—and those tuning in on TV today and listening in the chamber have heard quite clearly—is that it simply sets out, in its most basic format, a week that we can call and dedicate Local Food Week. It falls on the same week, as it happens, as Agriculture Week—two very distinct things; two very important issues.

My colleague from Timiskaming—Cochrane really pointed it out to this House when he gave his leadoff statement. He said that local Agriculture Week is about the producers, about the farmers. I'll talk to you on that just after.

But Local Food Week is about the product. Those are very, very different things. We should dedicate, certainly, a portion of our time to addressing those two issues. It's like having Mother's Day and Father's Day on the same day. You know what? I think they're two individuals, and they're two important people; we should celebrate them both. We should give them their own individual day to

celebrate them—or just call it Family Day and we'll be done with it. I don't think that's appropriate. I don't think it shows the appropriate amount of respect to our primary producers.

So here we are debating what is essentially deeming a week of the year to local food. What we should be talking about is the protection of our agriculture system. We should be talking about not only a national food policy but a provincial food policy, something that is lacking; something that addresses the ever-increasing pressures on our primary producers from free trade agreements that have been negotiated federally from the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party.

I remember them because I remember my parents putting me on a bus as a young boy, at 10 years old by myself, along with farmers in my area to go and protest the original GATT agreement, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in this province, where farmers circled the House of Commons in their tractors to protest what essentially was selling out their industry. What came next? The free trade agreement, which opened the door to cheap imports from the United States. What came after that was a promise by the federal Liberals under Chrétien to abolish the free trade agreement. But then what happened? We got NAFTA. We got expanded trade agreements that further degraded our primary producers' ability to compete.

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So you've got the dumping of cheap products into our country, into this province, that have absolutely decimated the producer side—absolutely. Whether it's in soft fruits or in vegetables or beef and other industries, they simply can't compete. But yet we see another 50 free trade agreements that are ready to be signed internationally—multinational agreements—that are on the books at the federal level without a peep from this provincial government. CETA, which will 100% decimate our milk and poultry producers: not a peep about fairness in our trade agreements.

These are all done under the cloak of secrecy. We know that governments actually have no real part to play. Ultimately, we get a free trade agreement that's signed, and everything is supposed to be good after that. Obviously, it has not benefited our primary producers to the extent that has been touted.

If agriculture is our second most important industry—in terms of economic activity—nationally and in the province; it contributes the second most amount, just behind our manufacturing sector, why shouldn't we protect it? We absolutely should. In fact, I say that agriculture production and food production in this country and in this province is the most important—bar none, by far—issue that we have. Why? Because if you cannot produce your own food and you do not secure the source of production, then you are as vulnerable, as a nation, as you would be in times of war. That may sound extreme, but if we can't feed ourselves, and we don't ensure that that exchange of knowledge in terms of how to grow and how to produce food—if we don't ensure that the Monsanto and the

ADM and the Cargills aren't controlling that massive industry and looking to degrade those small family farmers, to control their production and to augment their cost of production, then we are vulnerable. I see nothing in this bill G36 that even comes close remotely to addressing that issue. It boggles my mind that such an important issue can simply be addressed by a week of, "Hip, hip, hurrah; we all love our farmers."

You know what? They want you to do something. They need you to do something. They need you to stand up and to ensure that business risk management programs are fulfilled and sustained so that in times of need those programs are there. That is an important component.

They also need you to acknowledge that farmers are important stewards of our land. They add an incredible component to the overall environmental sustainability of our province. They have no-till, low-till processes that are innovative. They are absolutely, incredibly innovative in terms of their production and upgrades to their own machinery and facilities that we don't put a value on. We don't say, "We know you're doing a great job in reducing your carbon footprint. Let's help you out." We don't say that. We simply say, "Let the market play its role there, and if you can survive against the Monsanto and the Cargills and the ADMs, well that's fine."

Mr. Speaker, it begs the question: If we really took agriculture production seriously in this province—truly, sincerely—why wouldn't we have a standing committee on agriculture as they do at the federal level? What has gone on here? We're going to dedicate one simple week to agriculture production and local food, and another week to agricultural production, so two separate weeks out of the entire calendar year, but yet we don't have a format and a venue to discuss really important issues that affect farmers and food production in this province, whether it's a supply chain or regulatory regimes or how we can enhance local food consumption and promotion. I think the most suitable body for that is a standing committee on agriculture. And, Mr. Speaker, when we become the official government in this province—which hopefully will happen very soon—then I will make a real effort to put that forward, because that is a tangible way to tell our agriculture community that we actually believe in them, we actually can listen to them and we take their ideas seriously: through a standing committee. That's a wonderful idea that—you know what?—could have been infused, along with so many other great ideas, in this Local Food Act.

The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell says, "We don't need to. We shouldn't set targets. Let's just make it arbitrary. Everyone should, just out of the goodness of their hearts, buy local food." First of all, they can't find it because it's hidden in the shelves of the mega supermarkets. They don't do a good job promoting local food, despite any of your best efforts. Let's set some targets for our ministries here.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Our Minister of Safety and Correctional Services: Should we not ensure that if we're

putting food into our correctional facilities, that the vast majority of it be Ontario food? There absolutely should be a threshold that cannot be moved, a set target.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It is.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, it isn't. Absolutely it isn't, not across the entire public sector. Something could have easily been done here, but I think the government continues to bow down to the pressures of the multinationals, because if you set targets—the member from Prescott–Russell said we don't want to violate any of our trading agreements. That's always the old answer; that's always the old excuse: "We can't stand up for farmers because we can't stand against the multinationals." I say: Not only grow a backbone, but grow this industry.

Mr. Speaker, I'll end with this: If you ate today, thank a farmer; and if you are a farmer, thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know it's the nature of the place. I've been here for over 16 years, as have the members from York–Simcoe, Haldimand–Norfolk and—let's see—Eglinton–Lawrence. I know that when you're on that side of the House, because we've all been there, you've got to criticize everything that happens here. It's the same thing when you're on this side of the House: You can't agree with everything that's over there.

The first thing that I would recommend is that maybe for a week or for a month we leave all our talking points at home and we come in here and really have an open debate without any preconceived ideas about anything. I'll leave my talking points at home. As a matter of fact, most of the talking points that I get in my constituency office go into the shredder right away because, believe it or not, even though I'm saying this of my own government, if I ever said what was in some of the talking points, people would somehow take it not quite at face value. It's the same thing with what you're saying. Let's be totally honest about that.

Look, this is a great initiative. How could anybody be against a Local Food Act? Now, the member from Essex, who is a respectable member—he's been here for a couple of years now—makes this great distinction between Agriculture Week and Local Food Week, as if these two ideas are somehow in conflict with one another. All I would say to the few people that are watching us—first of all, the people that are watching us right now should get a discount at a food market or something. We love people to watch us, but I'm sure that they would like us to deal with the real issues that are facing Ontario. So please pass this bill, send it to committee, and let's talk about the real issues that affect the people of Ontario on an ongoing basis. Pass this bill now, today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: To follow up on some of the comments the member from Essex—

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I know our Attorney General—he's still speaking, actually—has suggested we leave our

talking points at home. It does cross my mind when I—dropping the talking points, it does seem odd, coming from a farm background, that we need a law, that we have to pass legislation with respect to local food.

Growing up on a farm, if you wanted something to eat, certainly in the summer, you just walked outside. During the winter, basically you walk out the back door, go down the lane to one of the barns and you have a choice of either eggs or broilers, lamb, beef. I'm trying to think what else we raised during the winter. Then during the summer, of course, we grew sweet peas; there's nothing better than sweet peas right off the vine. Everybody had gardens, and again, tomatoes, just about everything you could think of. Some of it was commercialized. My grandmother and I grew zucchini and marketed them through the local IGA; I ended up working at the local IGA after that. I worked at Culverhouse Canning. That's where our sweet peas went.

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The member from Oshawa made mention of a plethora of wild game. Of course, it won't be long until fiddleheads will be available, and cattail shoots, for example. Maple syrup—we always did maple syrup in the kitchen. We never had wallpaper in our kitchen, because when you're steaming the sap, it peels all the wallpaper off.

Peter Shurman had a meal at my house a year or so ago. I want to let Peter know, I've got some squirrel in the freezer now, so if you'd like to come back—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Toby.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I feel like this debate sometimes is we're just talking about the things we ate today for breakfast, lunch and dinner and all that. I like talking about food, but I think it would be nice to raise the level of debate in the House as well.

I'm pleased to follow my colleague from Essex, who actually does not speak from talking points. In response to the Attorney General, if you were listening, this was putting some good history down in this place, talking about the impacts of free trade. I think it was a good discussion and it's important. That's what we should be speaking about here.

From the Attorney General: I understand that you'd like a different kind of debate here, but I don't know what you expect from us on this side. You've put forward a bill that we've said we're going to support. I can't wait to get it into committee and actually do something with it, but in the meantime, there's absolutely no substance to this. How do you expect us to respond? Speaker, how would the Attorney General like us to respond? We could have a ribbon for local food. Maybe that should be the next big government bill, a local food ribbon, and we would somehow transform our food system here.

Interjection: A hat.

Mr. Jonah Schein: A hat; a local food hat.

This doesn't get us excited. There's a lot of promise here, but there has been very little put on the table, so to speak, here.

My colleague from Essex was talking about the real power of public institutions to transform our food system. That's the kind of thing we need to see here. We have in the House our health minister, our corrections minister. These are massive buying powers that could actually put some weight into supporting our farmers, into supporting our local food economy, but none of that is in the bill. Maybe when the government steps up with a bill with some substance that we can actually get our teeth into, we'll get a bit more excited. In the meantime, I think we're going to continue to hear speakers around this House just listing off some of their favourite foods in Ontario. I could add to that, and maybe I'll do that the next time around—some of my favourites—but I do hope that we can get this into committee and actually do something substantial here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Grant Crack: I'm somewhat shocked here this afternoon to hear my good friend—a real great hockey player, my line-mate on the Legiskaters—say in this House that retailers do not do a good job promoting local food. I can't agree with that. They do not hide local food produce in the back aisles, as was suggested. I was very proud to represent the Minister of Agriculture and Food at the Ontario Foodland Retailer Awards. As I had mentioned earlier, I'm very proud to be in the Metro flyer supporting the good work that they do.

I do have experience in retail stores, having worked for a bread company in the past, so I know what it's like to get listings. I know what it's like to have SKUs in there. I know what it's like to try to get your local products in the major chains. But what I can tell you is, to the comments that we did not consult, I've got a list here of about 150-plus. I would love to stand here, go through all 150 and say that these are the groups and organizations that we as a government actually consulted in preparing this particular piece of legislation.

Not one municipality wants to have prescribed legislated targets. I can refer to the reintroduction of the local food bill. The Rural Ontario Municipal Association doesn't want prescribed targets. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario doesn't want prescribed targets. The beekeepers, I don't imagine, want them as well. We've got this list here, and then, before the introduction—I could go through a number. The National Farmers Union, Jacob Kearey-Moreland, the residents of Orillia—I'm sure they're good people—contributed to this particular bill. It's the right bill at the right time. Let's move it to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Essex for his reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thank all the members who contributed to my 10-minute hit on this.

Ultimately, the main point that I want to reinforce is that of course we all support local food. Of course we all support value-added production of our food. Of course we support the wonderful historic nature of agricultural production and farming in this province. But this bill

doesn't address any of those. It simply lays out a week where the government, we believe, can pat itself on the back for naming the week Local Food Week—that's it. We were hopeful that there would be some tangible, real, progressive measures in here that protected that important nature of the industry.

I will reiterate: What we are protecting and should be protecting and focusing on is that incredibly invaluable knowledge base that is a farmer. These aren't simply people who plant a seed and watch a crop grow. They are accountants. They are mechanics. They are financial advisers. They are folks who are versed in construction. They are climatologists. They are environmentalists. They come with a unique skill set, and if we don't do everything we can to ensure that we have food security and food sovereignty, we will lose that knowledge base.

That's what we should be talking about: losing our domestic production of agriculture, because the corporate forces, the multinational forces that make up the largest agriculture companies on this planet, are applying so much pressure to small producers in Canada that they will cease to exist. A week dedicated to talking about how we should all eat locally grown fruit will not substantially change those pressures. I hope that we take a real, focused measure at some point in the future, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm going to have a bit of fun, because this is one of my pet peeves and subjects, and that is food. I'm a bit of an amateur cook, and I've always been interested in food my whole life. We grew a lot of zucchinis, tomatoes and rapini, all in my backyard, for years. We used to go to Canada Packers at Keele and St. Clair and get our manure right from Canada Packers there by the bushel and bring it back. We didn't buy that packaged stuff at Canadian Tire or these places. You've got to buy the real good natural fertilizer. As you know, the best fertilizer, probably—it's hard to get—is horse fertilizer. It's really good stuff.

I know the members across are making fun of this emphasis on local food, but it is something that is critically important. I totally encourage people to see the economic importance of agriculture, of supporting local agriculture. It is critically important that we make that connection.

That's why, later this month—not this month, but at the end of July—I do my annual tomato festival. This year I'm honoured that the Minister of Rural Affairs is going to be there as the guest speaker. What we do there is, we celebrate the fact that the GTA uses, consumes, more tomatoes than all other North American cities combined. More tomatoes are consumed in the GTA than in all North American cities combined.

That is the connection we try to make. We try to make the connection between the people who need good, fresh, healthy Ontario products. We have the best tomatoes, I think, in the world here in Ontario. You know, in Leamington and area and all over southern Ontario we've got these wonderful natural tomatoes. That's an example.

What I try to do, and I've tried for years, is to encourage people, my small grocers like Zito's, like Lady York—I try and tell them to promote the local Ontario products. Never mind the Mexican tomatoes that are always there. If you look at the shelves today—in fact, I turned away yesterday when I saw Roma tomatoes imported from Mexico.

We've even got wonderful greenhouse tomatoes. I've been to the Mastronardi greenhouse down Leamington way—incredible. We're one of the best greenhouse producers of vegetables in the world here in Ontario. Even in the wintertime we can eat Ontario products.

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This legislation is trying to say, "Look at all the government ministries. Look at the schools, the hospitals, our correctional institutions." We have the ability to try to put a framework through this legislation to encourage them to use Ontario products when we have the opportunity. We need this legislative framework to finally do something in an aggressive way, through this Legislature, to encourage that in everything we do, rather than just saying, "Oh, we're going to set up another committee." We've got enough committees. Let's start getting down to work and having the government of Ontario use local products, encourage the consumption of local products. It's good for the Ontario economy. It's good for our health, good for small business and good for the farmers. We just can't be passive bystanders. We've got to be engaged, and that's what this legislation does.

I notice I've got two very prominent local food connoisseurs in the gallery here today. I've got Bob Barnett, who has done incredible work on preserving farmland all the way up the Niagara Escarpment. He has done this for years and does great work in protecting our native natural lands.

Bryan Grimes is a local restaurateur, caterer and foodie. He loves Ontario—he introduced me to the incredible Ontario cheddar in Thamesville. You want to taste cheddar. They talk about Gorgonzola and they talk about Caciocavallo and they talk about all these—listen, Ontario cheddar, you get aged Ontario cheddar, it's some of the best cheese in the world. It is incredibly good quality. It can match up with any foreign cheese.

So this is what this act is trying to do. It's trying to educate, legislate the importance of investing in our agriculture, and we can't just do it by committee. We have to talk the talk in our own communities. I know if I look all across this great province, there are so many amazing products that are being made: in Algoma, the Boreal Forest Teas; in Grey county, the Blue Mountains Apple Pie Trail—all kinds of beautiful, locally grown products that need to be respected and promoted. In the Albion Hills, there are farm and learning centres; in Halton region, Springridge Farm. In Bruce and Grey counties, there's Grey Bruce Agriculture and Culinary Association and Foodlink Grey Bruce.

We should be promoting these, not just complaining about how bad things are in Ontario. We've got incredible chefs in Ontario. We've got incredible restaurants.

I remember I told the Minister of Tourism—he did a report on tourism, Greg Sorbara did. I said that one of the things we should learn from other countries—it's a great economic driver—is agri-tourism. If you visit or go to restaurants all over Europe, they have agri-tourism, where you go to farms, you go to local restaurants, and on the windows of the restaurants and at the farms, they say, "Come in and eat the local cheese. Drink the local wine." You can sleep at the farm and eat the local vegetables, all done locally. People come from all over the world to really experience these local products in Europe, and it's good for the local economy. It's good for the appreciation of the local products.

We need to do more agri-tourism in Ontario. Rather than just the bed-and-breakfast thing, we should have farm agri-tourism: When you go to a farm, you eat the local cheddar, the local milk, the local rabbit, goat, Ontario lamb. I know the Tories like promoting New Zealand lamb. We should eat Ontario lamb.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Stand up for Grey-Bruce.

Mr. Mike Colle: Stand up for Ontario goats. We've got great goat production in Ontario. Why do the Tories always talk about European and New Zealand goats and lamb? Eat the local stuff. It's fresh.

Mr. Speaker, you know so well in Wellington county, when you eat local, you really encourage and support local business, whether it's the farmer or the person selling those local products, whether it's cheese, vegetables, meat—Ontario beef. I hear the Tories always talking about Alberta beef and Texas beef. What about Ontario beef? I'll put Ontario beef up to any beef in the world. You've got Bruce county beef. There are some incredible-quality beef products in Ontario. So why do people go to restaurants and say they want Texas beef or Alberta beef? Ask for Ontario beef when you go to a restaurant. When you go to the store, where's the Ontario beef? The member from Carlisle will tell you that in Ontario we've got incredible beef. We've got lamb. And then Ontario corn, sweet—what do they call that, with the different colours of corn? It's so sweet, Ontario corn. I can't think of the name right now.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: And corn-fed beef.

Mr. Mike Colle: Corn-fed beef. Plus corn—I love eating corn. It's a beautiful thing. And Ontario sweet potatoes—there's nothing like it. Somebody mentioned fiddleheads. What a uniquely Canadian, Ontario vegetable. And then Ontario fish: The member there from Leamington and Essex—why does he never talk about Ontario perch? We've got an incredible little fish. He didn't mention perch when he stood up. He should be ashamed of himself. He didn't mention the Lake Erie perch. If you go down by Lake Erie, folks—I tell the member, go to Erieau and taste perch. You haven't tasted perch unless you've been to Erieau.

That's why we're here, to legislate; we're here to celebrate an incredible Ontario industry and healthy Ontario food, and to make the connection between the eaters and the farmers. Support each other. I love eating Ontario tomatoes, Ontario beef, Ontario goat. Let them eat Ontario goat; no New Zealand goat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm not even certain where to start after this, but I'm going to try to do my best. The member from Eglinton—Lawrence was very, very, very passionate about agricultural products from Ontario, and I'd sure like to invite him up to Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound to partake in some of those at some point.

He made an awful number of references to us talking about Alberta beef. The only connection we might make to Alberta is how they slam the Albertans and the economy that we could have out there which could support the economy of Ontario. And if they don't quit doing the things they're doing and putting so many people out of work in Ontario, we're going to have to have them move out there so they can actually get a job, because there's going to be none left in Ontario.

He almost sounded like he had converted to the PC Party there for a little while. He was talking common sense about the impact of the economy on agriculture. I sure hope the part-time ag minister gets a copy of that Hansard so she'll see just how proud some of her caucus are.

He left out little pieces, like how their overburdened red tape regulation has taken the abattoirs out of rural Ontario. How do those people in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound actually get their product to market for the people to be able to eat when we don't have that? Why did they allow the Ontario Tire Stewardship to increase fees to farmers for their tires by up to 2,000%? That seems to have a little bit of an impact on those farmers. I didn't hear anything—he did mention apples, but they could put \$25 million into the apple industry, which would rejuvenate it, and they could supply the whole market of Ontario. They've been to the Liberal table numerous times over seven years. They wasted \$275 million on one gas plant, but they can't find \$25 million over seven years for the whole apple industry.

Then I think I heard him say that there could be something coming with legislation standing up for goats. We need to ensure that we're talking about things that are viable. The agricultural industry is absolutely important to our economy, and we hope you will actually step up and do something rather than talk about it. Walk the talk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: According to what I heard from the member from Eglinton—Lawrence—and I do appreciate his rhyming off what seemed like the menu for tonight's dinner, simply a focus on what there could be to eat out there. We know what's out there to eat. There's wonderful food and wonderful produce that's available. What we need to do is ensure that the legislation that comes through this House protects that food, not just simply rhymes it off as if, you know, "Look at these wonderful things."

1530

You have federal legislation that is in direct conflict with primary producers in this province, and I have

never—in the days that I've spent in this House—heard a peep out of the Liberal government as to how that detrimentally affects our producers. I have not heard a peep about how the deregulation of packaging sizes at the federal level that are proposed are going to crush the canneries and continue to dismantle those processors. That's something that you could play a role in as a government. That's a voice that needs to be heard on behalf of our farmers. But, yet, not a peep.

Why? Again, because this is a framework. You talked about a framework. The framework that's been built around agriculture has been built around deregulation, opening up the borders to competition, cheap sources of food, that puts pressure onto our producers without any regard. Respectfully, you cannot say that that hasn't happened and continues to happen. We used to have such a wonderful, viable soft fruits industry in this province. That's all gone; literally bulldozed over. Why? Because you've opened the doors to free trade, deregulation and multinational companies that are willing and ready to crush the competition.

Stand up for producers. Ensure that there's fairness in trade agreements. That's the root cause of the issue, and not simply a week dedicated to talking about agriculture.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I would like to begin by thanking everybody who spoke to this bill.

Food is an issue that all of us can relate to no matter where we live in the world. It's a basic need, and we can all relate to it and talk to it. I rise in support of this bill because this bill is about promoting Ontario food, but it's also about striking that balance. It's about striking a balance between promoting Ontario food and prescribing what ought to be done. So, it is that fine balance and, yes, it is about promoting Ontario food.

The member from Eglinton—Lawrence very eloquently painted a wonderful picture of produce that is grown in Ontario. It's produce that I know about first-hand because in Mississauga we have a farmers' market, and I can see the hunger for good, locally grown, fresh food right here in Mississauga, right by Square One. Every year for four months we have the farmers' market, and we have people coming all the way from Burlington to Mississauga. I often ask them—because I'm there: "Why do you come?" They say, "We come here because this is the only time in the brief summer that we have where we can buy food directly from those who produce it as opposed to going to a supermarket." Clearly, here in Ontario, no matter how urbanized we are, we want that connection directly to locally homegrown food, preferably being able to buy it directly from the farmer who grew it.

When I go to the farmers' market I'm always astonished at the wealth of knowledge I learn from those farmers when they explain the different types of carrots. If you take the time to talk to them, it's just so wonderful to learn about the food that you're buying and to have that connection.

This is a great step. It may not be perfect, but I do think it strikes that balance between promoting but not being overly prescriptive. If our food is good and if it's affordable, people will buy it. We don't need to have quotas and targets. That's how I feel. I think we have a great product. We're doing our best to produce it, and I think it's the way to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: After listening to the discussion here on Bill 36—just to ask the Liberal government about that old commercial—I think it was a Burger King commercial—“Where’s the beef?”

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Where’s the beef? Where’s the actual substance of this bill?

We hear, from across the way, the Liberals talking the talk, and they’re very good at it; I’ll give them that. But what they won’t do is actually walk the walk. So we have to make sure that this type of legislation, should it move forward, actually does what we do on a daily basis where I come from, and that is, purchase local food items. We do support our local farmers. As mentioned earlier, I am a producer of grains and also beef—

Mr. Bill Walker: And a consumer.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: And a consumer, absolutely.

Here we are once again, listening to this government try to take ownership, if you will, of the agricultural sector. We all know how well that’s going for them. They’ve killed the horse racing industry. They brought in the Ontario tire stewardship program, which is increasing fees on agricultural machinery and tractors.

Mr. Bill Walker: Abattoirs.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: They’re inundated with red tape. Local abattoirs are having a very hard time keeping afloat, those who are still around. You want to talk about buying local produce, but you can’t.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Response?

Mr. Mike Colle: Again, I thank the members for their input: Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Essex, Mississauga East—Cooksville and Northumberland.

I just think that there is a time for government criticism and all this kind of stuff. I’m just saying, here, we should all get together and try to redouble our efforts and really talk to the ministers involved to really do an aggressive job at promoting these wonderful producers, the farmers, and the products that they produce in Ontario. We should be positive, because if we keep dragging down this province and saying, “Well, this is wrong; that’s wrong”—I say I’d rather spend my time saying the incredible people in this province grow incredible product. I look at the pages. When you go home tonight, make sure what you eat is Ontario-grown. Ask your parents. Ask them, “Does that beef come from Ontario?” If you eat a pork chop: Ontario pork.

I remember when I was at T&T a couple of weeks ago. T&T is one of the largest chains of grocery stores, and they are one of the largest producers of Ontario pork. That’s because the new Chinese immigrants who come to

Ontario really love Ontario pork, because they say, “We’ve never tasted such sweet pork in all our lives than we do in Ontario.” So T&T is a huge consumer of Ontario pork. That way, the pork industry thrives, and that’s the way we’ve got to think.

There are new markets opening up. Look at all the lamb that is now being eaten in Ontario because of some of our immigrants. We’ve got incredible markets opening up because they know, when they come to Ontario, how wonderful and safe the food is. You don’t know what you’re getting from garlic imported from China, so when you go to the grocery store, buy the local Ontario garlic. That’s what we’ve got to do: local products, local jobs. It tastes—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It’s a pleasure to be able to rise today and speak to Bill 36, the Local Food Act.

I must say that as I listened to the debate today, I think that while for some members it’s an opportunity to do a dream menu, it seems, there’s also a certain amount of conversation about how personally we are connected. I just want to say for the record that my garlic is up. It’s about four inches tall, so we’re moving along.

On the surface, the Local Food Act seems like a step forward. Unfortunately, there is a contrast between what the government says it wants to do—promote agriculture—and what the government actually does, which is increase red tape and costs for farmers.

Liberal agricultural policies are full of shortcomings, despite the seemingly benign nature of their bills. I’m disappointed that this bill doesn’t do more to support agriculture and local food. I understand that to support local food, you need to support our farmers. However, this bill does nothing to address the challenges farmers are facing, such as red tape and regulation and increasing hydro costs.

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I attended a round table in my riding of York—Simcoe a few weeks ago and met with local farmers. I continue to hear from farmers that the government imposes policies and programs on rural Ontario and our agricultural industry without understanding what the impact will be.

One issue that was brought to my attention—in fact, it was the first one that the group wanted to speak to—was the question of pesticide use. Fruits and vegetables from other jurisdictions are brought into Ontario and are regulated under a totally different regime, but these products end up on the same plates as the produce grown here. So the arguments that are used, in terms of having a very controlled pesticide environment for Ontario agriculture—ends up on the plate for the consumer with the food from other jurisdictions, which do not have the same kind of regime. Of course, this is a fundamental unfairness for our farmers, who are then not playing on a level field.

The tire tax is yet another example of the Liberal government making it more expensive and difficult for farmers to operate and make a living. Alex Makarenko, a

farmer in my riding, told me that he will have to pay almost \$500 more in taxes just for his tractor tires—\$500 more for a set of tires? Does the Premier really believe that farmers have an extra \$500 to pay? This is even more shocking to me, as the Premier's first stop as Minister of Agriculture was in Bradford, the same place where I met my constituent Mr. Makarenko. It was in Bradford, where she promised, "I have made it my business to get to understand what goes on in rural Ontario and in the agriculture community." Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that the Premier has succeeded in understanding rural Ontario when she makes farmers pay \$500 in extra taxes for tires alone. What will the Premier tax next? We know it will have to be something in order to pay off the bill to cancel the gas plants.

As if the tire tax was not enough, the Liberals' College of Trades will not be any help to farmers. In order to fund this new bureaucracy, the college is forcing new fees on journeymen and apprentices, which will increase the cost of those services for all Ontarians, including farmers. If farm equipment needs to get fixed, farmers need to call on mechanics, or perhaps electricians and technicians, and they will find that they will be paying more for these services, all thanks to the College of Trades, which is making it more difficult for tradespeople to stay in business and making it more difficult for young people to become a tradesperson.

If the Premier really wants to do something about agriculture, she should be reviewing land use planning. With the greenbelt that was imposed on much of the area, the land has been frozen. It will be reviewed in three years. We have isolated pockets of agricultural land where, in fact, agriculture needs a critical mass. You need a critical mass in order to support the secondary services that all farmers need, whether it's a repair, whether it's a dealer for farm equipment, whether it's a veterinarian, whether it's a specialist in feed mills and things like that.

Farmers need infrastructure. In my riding, they need the Bradford bypass just as much as the commuter does.

The horse racing industry is a perfect example of the lack of understanding of how agriculture works. As I say, it's a good example of this government's lack of understanding of the web of connection. In order to drive economic value, you've got to have a seamless interdependence. You can't cut off one part and expect the rest to survive.

Farmers are stewards of the land. They farm where they can with the newest technology: the GPS for determining the right place to put the right fertilizer, the technology on manure containment. These are just two examples.

There are dairy barns where there's a computer system that monitors every cow in that barn. We're talking about high tech, we're talking about good jobs and we're talking about a system that, quite frankly, isn't meeting the needs of our youth to be able to go into farming.

People have mentioned the issues around abattoirs. People want to buy local meat. Well, that option was

taken away a few years ago, and it's one that continues to hamper the ability of people to have small-scale farming and be economic at the same time.

The other thing we need to understand is that the Liberals have failed to listen to farmers. Agriculture and local food stakeholders are very supportive of the concept of the Local Food Act, but Bill 36 outlines much less than what the agricultural community had been expecting. Many of them put forward specific proposals that have not been included in the act.

The Premier even acknowledged that the Local Food Act introduced last fall was weak, and she committed to introducing a strengthened act. But the bill still has no substance, and most of the power in the bill is something that could be done today. She can consult anytime she wants. She can establish goals and targets. There's absolutely nothing to prevent her from doing that.

In the Ontario PC white paper on agriculture, we put forward a number of concrete ideas that would improve Ontario's food system, such as creating a regional food terminal, implementing a one-window access to government for farmers and agribusinesses, and a dedicated fund for the risk management program. The Ontario PCs are the only ones with a plan to help farmers and make life easier. We understand the needs of rural Ontario and the importance of creating a level playing field for all Ontario's farmers.

If we have farmers able to make a living, we will always have farming and farmland. It's most important to consider the value of the right kind of planning that will give farmers the area of land that's contiguous, which will allow them to make a viable economic contribution to this province and to feed us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to put some comments in the debate that has been brought forward today. I think everyone here is in agreement that no one can survive without food, so it's very important that we have a good, sustainable Local Food Act that promotes healthy food, that promotes farming, and that we'll continue to have our farmers as a solid staple in our economy, to make sure we have good, healthy food.

The other element that New Democrats have suggested is that we look at promoting farming as a viable occupation. There are many, many things—the member opposite alluded to the College of Trades. Young people aren't involving themselves in that type of occupation, so that's why the College of Trades did come up and get proclaimed, because we want to have people feel like that is an occupation that's just as elite as any other occupation in Ontario.

We all have a role to play in producing food, in building homes, in having offices provide services. It's important, when we talk about our local food, that we let our young people know that we need them to continue that.

Generations now—our farmers are passing them on from generation to generation. You see the sign, you

know, Stanford and Sons Farms, and "Sons" dropped off. We have to make sure those sons stay in there, and also get our own daughters and sons involved in farming, because a strong Local Food Act in Ontario is extremely important to everyone's survival.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

1550

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today and to pass some comments on the message from the member from York-Simcoe today, who I think did a very good job explaining—I'm not sure if they are supporting the bill, but certainly she expressed her concerns around the bill, what she thought was right about the bill and what could be improved upon.

Obviously, I look at this from three points: I look at it from the economic aspects of the bill, I look at it from the environmental perspective and I look at it from the perspective of a consumer in the province of Ontario—myself and my family—that is concerned about food security off into the future. It seems to me, if you look at what's been done in the past with the Foodland Ontario branding and you look at the messaging that was out there—"Good things grow in Ontario"—I think consumers in Ontario, and probably in other provinces and in the States, caught on to that a little bit.

What Bill 36 does, in my opinion, is it takes that further. It makes consumers think a little bit more when they go to the supermarket. When they make those food choices they make every day, they'll start to look for Ontario-grown food. I have to admit, in the past, I didn't do that. If you go back into my teens and my twenties and thirties, I probably went and bought the apples that looked the reddest or the apples that were the least expensive. It was actually a friend of mine, who is a farmer down in Vineland, who sat me down one day and explained how the Ontario food and agricultural system worked and why I should be looking for homegrown fruit and vegetables, and other food as well, and that's something that we continue to do today.

I think the intent of this bill is to ensure that everybody in Ontario is aware that there are huge advantages if we do start to shop locally. If we buy local-grown food, it means good things for consumers, for the retailers and for the farmers themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a privilege to get up and respond to the comments made by the honoured member from York-Simcoe. It's interesting; she talks about the latest technology, how the farmers have always moved and how the technology has changed. I remember growing up on a farm where having a 29-horsepower tractor—a Massey Ferguson 35—was actually being very progressive, and somewhat limited in what people had. We had one of the larger farms in the area. Of course, once the old farm marketing boards came in, those quickly went to 50, 100, 150; 200-horsepower tractors are the norm at home. They've been very quick, the advances in

seed, allowing us to grow corn in areas that we could never grow it in before back in the 1960s and the 1970s.

We hear the government in the House—you mentioned the lack of stakeholder input. You don't have to legislate or provide legislation that allows you to listen to your constituents. I'm somewhat surprised that you actually put that in legislation. The constituents in this case could be the farmers, the seed producers and the local supermarkets that right now have a very hard time with getting produce that the people actually want to buy. There's only the one local food supply or fruit supply area, and that's in Toronto. That's not very local when you talk to eastern or western Ontario.

We talk about the farmers and their stewardship. What's good for the soil is good for the crops and good for the farmers. Their values align, so we can trust farmers to do the right thing when it comes to the land.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and talk about the Local Food Act. I had the pleasure last week of speaking for some time on it—20 minutes last week. There is a lot to say about local food. I think that most people would agree that food connects many people, many communities and many issues across the province.

Last week I focused on the fact that many of the stakeholders who really could contribute and make this legislation really strong had not been consulted. Their voices were not reflected in it, but I understand, in conversations with the government, that they're willing to be considerate of those voices going forward.

What became very clear, though, in the debate last week is that we truly do not have a vision for food and for the agribusiness and agriculture industry in the province of Ontario, and this is a small piece of it. What G36 actually equates to is opening the door to having a progressive conversation about the importance of food and food systems.

There are some ongoing systemic issues in the province of Ontario, where farmers and those voices from farmers have been very clear that they do not feel supported in the province—the red tape that they deal with, the surprise inspector visits from people who actually are not qualified to sort of pass judgment on what they're doing. The work before us on the food portfolio is quite profound.

But when you look at the number of farmers across Ontario, that number is falling, and if we're going to have a sustainable local food production industry, we need to do more to make farming a viable and attractive career option for young people. The education system is a key component of this, and I look forward to expanding on that in future hits.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for our questions and comments, and I return to the member for York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments of the members from London-Fanshawe, Oakville, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and Kitchener-Waterloo.

To the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, I guess where she talks about no vision and the need to have a conversation, I want to get beyond the conversation. The conversation has been going on now for the last couple of hundred years, and it's time to think in terms of the 21st century. It's time to recognize the technology. It's time to recognize the costs and the kinds of challenges that agriculture faces.

I didn't mention that there's the man who has to keep his lettuce cool, and it costs \$8,000 a month on his hydro bill to keep his lettuce cool. And you want to be able to find food locally and cheaply and all of this when those costs are going up, when there's no recognition of, quite frankly, the value. Everybody talks about how much they like to eat, but nobody thinks about how much investment they're going to make in it.

The issue of food security today and being able to feed yourself as a province or as a country is something that we should all be giving some serious thought to. It's the kind of thing that—as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo said at the end of her comments about making farming viable, it's more than just a drive in the country to look at the cows grazing on the hillside. It's about the red tape. It's about the impediments to getting to market. It's about all of those things that come together, that mean that children look at the life of their parents and say, “Who would want this?” We say you should want it. It's time-honoured. It should pay well. It should be a career.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I am glad to join the debate on Bill 36, the Local Food Act. This bill has been introduced in the House by the government as its plan to improve access to Ontario's first-class, locally produced food to the people of our province. When you create a plan, there are details that should be outlined so your plan can be implemented. Sadly, this bill is a plan to formulate a plan.

However, one saving grace of this bill is that it encourages us to talk about the issues of access to locally produced foods and helps frame the conversation. We all know that the new Premier is fond of having a lot of conversation. Here's the problem with that conversation piece of this whole bill: As you've heard from this side of the House already, this bill is light on substance, which makes it hard to criticize. One could perhaps draw the conclusion that it was written this way on purpose. A lack of substance is one way to limit criticism. But, Speaker, on this side of the House, our job is to provide a different perspective so that there's a full, robust discussion about all legislation that is presented in this chamber.

When we talk about food, most of us, if not all of us, agree that everyone needs food to live, and without a healthy, balanced diet, your health can be compromised.

1600

We know that farmers feed cities and that the agri-food sector plays a crucial role in the economic success

of both Ontario and Canada. The agri-food sector employs over 700,000 people in Ontario and contributes over \$34 billion to the provincial economy. We need to pay attention to this sector, and when we are introducing bills in this House we need to get it right. I am proud that the New Democrats have the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane in our caucus. He is a strong voice for farmers because he was a farmer, and he gets why this issue is important, not only to the people who work every day to feed Ontario, but also the rest of us, regardless of where we live.

This bill talks about a lot of planning, but the plan isn't there. I would hope that when this government wrote this bill, it consulted with stakeholders, food producers, processors, retailers and restaurant owners. Of course, the consumer should also have been consulted. If you're going to have conversations like the Premier likes, you might as well have a full scope of conversations.

In 2012, when the Local Food Act was first introduced, the local food week planned to celebrate Ontario food was slated for the same time our farmers would be hard at work planting their crops. How does the Ministry of Agriculture make that type of mistake? How do you celebrate local food without the local food? Marketing 101 says that if you're going to promote a product, you'd better make sure it's available for people to buy. You don't arrange a celebration of local food with the intent of encouraging people to get excited and buy it at a time when the food is not available. If farmers are busy planting their crops, then maybe the availability could be a problem.

Now the bill is back again, and the week suggested is the same week as Agriculture Week. Why is this a problem? Both the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and the member from Oxford have eloquently described what this means to farmers. But just like the gas plants, the government is more focused on a political solution, what makes the problem go away, instead of addressing the issue in a constructive and meaningful way.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane captures the essence of the problem. Here's what he had to say:

“Agriculture Week is about the people who grow the food. There's a difference—a huge difference. Agriculture Week: It's about a farmer standing in the field in the spring, picking up a handful of soil and deciding whether that soil is ready to plant or not. Agriculture Week: It's about watching your crops wither in a drought, getting blasted by hail and wondering if you're going to make your payments that winter. It's about a combine pulling in and doing the outside round of your field. It's about the feeling you get when you know that that's going to be a bumper crop; that is an incredible feeling, after you've tended that crop all summer. It's about staying up all night and saving a heifer calf from your best cow. It's also about, a couple of days later, losing that cow to milk fever. It's about last Thursday when the farmers had to deal with the ice storm, and for the people who work in agriculture, their first thought was the welfare of their animals. That is Agriculture Week.

"Agriculture Week is looking in the paper and seeing wedding pictures in front of tractors, either big, new John Deeres or old, restored ones. It's about weddings, births and funerals in little country churches. That is Agriculture Week."

What we're hearing from farmers is that this is a big problem, and if you're not hearing that, you're not listening.

The bill should also look for new and innovative ways to help all Ontarians have better access to locally grown food. I've heard some of the members opposite talk about how their studies show that people are willing to pay more for Ontario food, but isn't a big part of the problem that we have to pay more for the things that we are growing right here in our own backyard? What are we doing to help our farmers better compete? What are we doing to make sure all Ontarians, not just those who can afford it, have access to great food? Many people face hardships in today's economy and struggle to make ends meet. Whether you're paying expensive hydro bills, skyrocketing tuition fees for post-secondary education, paying the insurance bill or just keeping up with everyday life, many people have to make tough choices about the food they buy or, unfortunately, about the food they can't buy.

Many families are forced to use food banks because life is just too expensive and their paycheques have grown nowhere near the rate of inflation and the skyrocketing cost of everyday living. This is a plan to have a plan. Having a plan should be a starting point, but this bill falls short of reassuring stakeholders and Ontarians that it will deliver a real, workable and sustainable local food plan.

Here are three elements a plan should contain: A plan that describes a path to an end; a plan that describes what done looks like, not only at the end but along the way to done; and a plan that reduces uncertainty, increases understanding and improves efficiency. Sadly, these elements are not in this bill. This bill feels like a haphazard effort by this government. We expect more from this government.

This new government has failed to provide a clear vision and way forward. For New Democrats, just planning to have a plan isn't good enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given another opportunity to speak following my colleague from London-Fanshawe. I heard intently her concern about this week. This week is well documented in terms of when it's going to begin and its duration.

Coming from my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, this issue of raising awareness and promoting eating locally is the right thing to do. Yes, we can tinker and fine-tune the bill when we go to committee, but at the end of the day, the proposed legislation is clearly laid out in the bill. It talks about fostering success and the resiliency of local food economies and the system. It also increases the awareness of local food.

What other way to promote Ontario food than a dedicated week, at least one week in the year, to encourage every Ontarian—they're already buying locally. But what further reinforcement by having a dedicated week to talk about Ontario food in our schools, in our communities, in restaurants and everywhere.

My colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence talked earlier about a particular grocery store in the Toronto area that has dedicated themselves to selling Ontario produce. That's a great thing to do. So to reinforce the message of buying locally, we now have a dedicated week to encourage further reinforcement. So, there might be criticism about the bill and what have you; that's why you can have a committee and go through committee to further vet and strengthen the bill. By being a critic on the bill, we're not moving this forward, but more importantly, we're here to do the business for Ontarians.

I appreciate every farmer out there providing produce for us every day. We eat locally and talk about local food, but more importantly, having legislation to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise and comment on the member from London-Fanshawe. Her statement that farmers feed cities is very true, and the lack of this legislation to have a plan—it's a "plan to plan," I think, if I quote her—is very true. It talks about just where this government has gone over the last 10 years and how they've affected the agriculture industry with their lack of consulting with stakeholders.

They're proposing—the member from Scarborough-Agincourt—that they can make changes at committee. I guess they're looking for good ideas. They're coming to the right side when they're looking at the party opposite. But we have to look at this government's record and how they've treated—you know, they've killed the farmers markets. It took a lot of pressure to reinstate them—legislation in the last term.

Small wineries are begging for help. I mean they're surviving in spite of this government. I had the chance to visit a number of them this summer and was quite surprised to see how they're literally forced to put up small shacks on their wineries so they can have somebody there to sell wine because they have no other way of doing it. To me, that doesn't sound like the government is trying to encourage growth in this industry.

1610

We sat through a committee and heard from different stakeholders: the issues with cideries, and how they are discouraged from distributing their own cider and are forced to go with international suppliers who are allowed to bargain and offer discounts that they can't. I hear talk about, "Well, there's these are free trade agreements," but there's nothing that would not allow a multinational to come in and offer a discount that our own suppliers can't. It almost seems to be anti-competitive.

We're looking forward to some real changes that would make it affordable to farm in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think the member from London—Fanshawe has clearly outlined some of the softer issues—the emotional issues and the cultural issues—of the food industry and the food sector. We have to remember those stories, because they're actually part of our history as a province. I think it's very apparent, as we move forward, that a whole generation is losing touch and actually losing that connection to the land. In part, it has happened very slowly over the years, but even the curriculum in our education system has not been focused on that stream to farming, that connection with agriculture and that acknowledgement that food comes from the environment around us.

I really liked the comments that were made last week around the food systems that are part of the agricultural and rural economy. They're very much connected to the municipal economy. I mean, these are not exclusive sectors; they're very much connected.

Even in the education system, I think this is clearly a missing component. I hope that at committee, once it's supported, we're able to strengthen and put some structure into the conversation around how we can actually support that apprenticeship and career training direction to the agricultural sector.

Those are good jobs. We need those jobs in the future. The rural economy clearly has not felt supported. This is an opportunity, through this piece of legislation, for us to explore some options and be creative. I look forward to that discussion at the committee session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate once again and to express my support for Bill 36. As I said earlier, as a consumer, I obviously don't have a farming background, and I don't believe anybody in my family, at least as far back as I know, has a farming background either. The Flynn family has always been a consumer of food and always thankful that there are good farms around that we can rely on for our food security.

I think there are some great markets in the province of Ontario. Certainly we've got a concentrated population. We've got farmland—we've got some of the best farmland as I understand it. If you go by the Acri or the Agri system on soil, we've got some of the best soil in the country and, I think, some of the best soil on the North American continent. So I think we've got a lot to be thankful for.

As I said earlier, the person who taught me the most about farming and how it functions as a business—as a way of life—was my friend Jack Philbrick, who owns, or did own, a tender fruit farm in Vineland. I know that Jack attended the University of Guelph. He took over the family farm and was able to retire a few years ago. I always sensed that Jack had got farming right. He understood how the process should work; he understood where his market was; he understood what he had to do to make sure that people like myself understood the

importance of buying and consuming Ontario-grown products.

I see Bill 36 as really an extension of the argument that a farmer was making to me that if I, as a consumer, pay more attention to the choices I make when I'm doing my shopping for food for the week, I can actually make a difference; the choices I make at the supermarket and the restaurant can make a difference to the economy of the province of Ontario, to make sure the markets remain healthy and that the farmers who are growing the fruit or the vegetables or the beef or the veal and all the other things grown in Ontario—that that industry remains healthy as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe that concludes the time we have for questions and comments.

I return to the member for London—Fanshawe for her two minutes to reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank all the members for their comments during this debate.

There's a story that actually comes to my mind when we talk about food: It's the grasshopper and the ant. If you remember that fable—I'm sure all of you do, but I'm going to just kind of explain it—

Mr. Bill Walker: Walk us back and—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, it's storytime in the Legislature right now.

The grasshopper was a very vivacious, happy-go-lucky insect, and the ant was a very hard-working—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Industrious.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —industrious insect. It was summertime; it was the time that you're supposed to gather food and make sure that everybody was prepared, because when the bad weather came, you were going to find yourself with a shortage, and that's going to be really bad news.

The grasshopper loved to play his fiddle and dance all summer, and it was just a great time for him. He was all about the fun. The ant was about the work, and the ant was about the preparation, and the ant had a plan to make sure that he had enough food for winter so when the winter comes, he won't have an issue.

The ant would say to the grasshopper, "Aren't you going to be making sure you have enough food for the winter?" The grasshopper would say, "No, no, I've got lots of time," and he'd continue dancing and such. Well, when the winter hit, the grasshopper did not have enough food, and of course the ant had enough food.

We know the end of the story, and we don't want to go to that. I never did tell the children what actually happened at the end of the story, but the lesson was there: The grasshopper had an issue.

This is about planning, and we talked about the lack of planning. It's important that, when we talk about local food, we have a plan so that we can support our farmers and we all can count on that food being there at the end of the day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise again for an opportunity to talk about Bill 36. You know, this particular

bill is very important to me, not just because I'm from an urban area, but, more important, very shortly we are celebrating Asian Heritage Month.

I know of nobody in this House and out in the community who doesn't recognize the fact that within the Chinese community, we have more restaurants than anywhere else. Running through my colleagues: the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and his riding; the Minister of Research and Innovation, and his riding; the members from Oak Ridges-Markham, Toronto-Danforth, Trinity-Spadina, Scarborough-Rouge River—and my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt—we have thousands of Chinese restaurants across Ontario, and we know that in each of those restaurants, they are buying locally and working with the local producers. I'm very pleased that very shortly we will have an opportunity of further celebration of Asian food, Asian culture. And I forgot my colleague from Mississauga; he has a big Chinese community.

We know that this proposed bill, Bill 36, will further reinforce a message about raising the awareness and appreciation of farmers and their good work out in the community. Very clearly in the bill, it talks about three things. The purpose is very clearly laid out in the bill, the three purposes of this act:

"1. To foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario.

"2. To increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food." And I just commented about Asian Heritage Month coming up.

"3. To encourage the development of new markets for local food."

Let me spend a little time on the third objective of this particular bill. We all recognize that Ontario has one of the safest—and the best food out there in the world. It's second to none. I know that with the growing economy around the world, many of the Asian markets are looking to Ontario for the safe food products, and the fact that we—I know my colleagues opposite can talk about the beef farmers, the vegetable growers and what have you. They're coming to Ontario, folks, okay?

Let me be very clear. I remember meeting, when the former Premier had the various delegates from China—they are looking to our food products here in Ontario, from poultry farmers, from beef farmers, from vegetable growers, and the dairy products, because we have safe food products that we can trust. We don't need to import anything. We're now exporting—one of the largest exporters of different food products.

1620

Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very pleased, for the remaining time, to share with Ontarians what we're talking about. Ontario, in terms of food markets, is a \$55-billion industry for farmers, producers, distributors, retailers, restaurants, food service operators and agri-food sectors. This is a very, very large, robust sector.

Second, Ontarians like to shop and eat locally. We know from data that over 80% of Ontarians like to shop locally. Every one of us in the House has stood up and

talked about their local farmers' markets or local grocers buying local food, and that's the right thing to do.

This legislation further reinforces buying locally—and not just buying locally; also, encouraging producing locally.

I remember when I was visiting a local elementary school recently. They were looking at building a green space so the young people in the school can have a little community garden. That, again, is the right thing to do. This particular community garden can then lead into the school breakfast program. How cool is that? That's the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

This particular legislation is raising awareness. I know my colleagues opposite have raised concerns about this particular week, during the week of Thanksgiving, starting the Monday before Thanksgiving, to proclaim it every year as Local Food Week. My comment here is not to challenge their opinion, but the fact that we need at least—I'm not saying that we shouldn't do more than a week—one week out of the entire year to raise awareness across the province about how great local grocers are, local producers are, local processors are. At the end of the day, regardless of whether they live in an urban area like my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt or live in a rural area, every Ontarian will now have an opportunity to celebrate.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we also know our government has dedicated millions of dollars to support the industry. Through the legislation, it's another opportunity for the government of Ontario to further invest. Right now, since 2003, we have invested almost \$116 million to support local food through marketing campaigns, through promotions such as Foodland Ontario that some my colleagues have talked about, through funding from the Broader Public Sector Investment Fund, through research.

I know when I was teaching, Guelph university had done a lot of research work in terms of making sure we have safe food, ensuring the sustainable food products out there, building capacity—and also, ongoing conversations about food produce, not just here in Ontario, but around the world.

The other piece here is, this proposed legislation also gets other ministries working together. For example, I know for a fact that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has a program dealing with northern fruit and vegetables.

In my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, there's also a local hospice looking at local food produce in the kitchen.

The other piece is the cafeteria procurement process—again, reinforcing buying locally through the local farmers. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services, through the Student Nutrition Program, are buying locally. I know this particular program quite well. As a former school board trustee, I know the Toronto District School Board looked towards the local farmers and local producers to get the food for the students in our schools.

Across the board, this particular legislation will help, not just the local neighbourhood, but across the province. This is the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

The other piece I want to share with the members here is that there are a number of initiatives going on right now, as we speak. I want to do a shout-out to the Black Creek Community Farm. My colleague from High Park would recognize this particular farm. Here in the city of Toronto, we're very proud of the Black Creek Community Farm. Last year, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs visited the farm and did an inaugural event. This particular farm is supported by a number of local agencies such as FoodShare, and is led by a local group called Everdale. It also has other partners, such as York University, through the faculty of environmental studies; Ryerson University's Centre for Studies in Food Security; and the World Crops Project; along with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, to make the land available to make this urban farm, so that the young people, as well as the community, have the pleasure of doing urban farming in a seven-acre conservation area in the city of Toronto. Again, it's the right thing to do, that our government continues to support and nurture this kind of initiative. This particular farm also has an intergenerational component. How cool is that, that you have young people working with seniors and seniors providing those historical contexts that some of the young people may not have?

The last piece before my time is up: I wanted to share with Ontarians, but also with my colleagues, the members of the House, that although I live in an urban centre, my family came from a rural area in mainland China. My mother's family was one of the largest poultry producers in a rural part of China. We had one of the largest producers of poultry, and when we in Ontario faced SARS not too long ago, I know that industry was devastated in China. I know, moving forward, our government has led the way in terms of exporting our good, healthy, safe—it has to be safe—food from Ontario around the world. I'm very, very proud of our farmers and every producer out there.

As I end my remarks, I want to encourage everyone: I know we have healthy debate about this proposed legislation, but more importantly, this legislation is about the future, the future of agri-food in Ontario, to make it robust and sustainable into the 21st century. I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to talk about this legislation, and I encourage every Ontarian to have this kind of conversation, whether it's at home, at workplaces, in school or in the community, because there are different kinds of conversations the Premier talks about. Everybody has a voice about food, because we need sustainable food in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to bring some remarks in regard to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt. She kind of wrapped up her comments with regard to talking that this bill is going to be the future. I

find it interesting, because they continue to push very strongly and very hard with the Green Energy Act, which is actually taking land—valuable agricultural land—out of production. The last time I looked, the biggest farms that they promote are wind farms, and the last time I looked at that, they did not produce an iota of the food that she's so proud of. I think hopefully they'll take a look at that one.

It's wonderful to promote local food. I have the Keady Farmer's Market, a huge farmers' market in my area that attracts people from hundreds of miles around, both producers and consumers. There are small wineries like Coffin Ridge, and yet we can't seem to get legislation that would actually allow them to do more, and it has a ripple effect to the rural economy and the jobs that would be there. I had the Hanover Raceway, and with their idea of cancelling the Slots at Racetracks Program, they basically have annihilated that agricultural industry, which has huge spinoff economic benefit.

You know, it's a lot of talk. I would have liked to have seen—why can't we have a Local Food Week and an Agriculture Week? Why did they have to jump on the back of one that's been there for many, many years, I believe introduced by a member by the name of Bert Johnson? If they really wanted to promote this, why wouldn't it be a daily thing? Why would they not do things that would actually be actions as opposed to a bunch more words and reports? Why wouldn't they come in and do things like cutting energy costs? The margins that farmers make are very minimal to begin with, and they keep adding a burden to them with energy costs. Why would they not cut red tape and regulation? They got rid of almost all the abattoirs across rural Ontario, which again impedes the ability for the local farmer to get their product to market. And these gas plants—there's going to be a billion dollars that are going to be wasted, that's going to be on the back of the taxpayer, particularly that farmer who has very limited margins.

They need to do more. This is just one more example of a lot of hyperbole. Farmers feed cities. We need to have action, not words.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A pleasure to rise and to listen to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt. I was thrilled to hear about her family and about local food initiatives. She speaks extremely well. In fact, she speaks so well, you would actually think that there was something to this bill. People who are watching at home would be surprised to learn, I think, after hearing her that this bill consists of only one item, and the one item is to declare a Local Food Week—to name a week. That's all it is. That's it. To listen to her speak, you would think that maybe there would be some parts of this bill that would deal with procurement of government agencies of local food. Why shouldn't we here, for example, procure our food locally, or be required to? Or government ministries, representing millions of dollars of procurement clout? But that's not in the bill.

1630

You would think, perhaps, there was some protection for farmers—other members have mentioned this—around hydro costs, perhaps, or abattoirs or any number of things, but in fact, none of that's in the bill. There's nothing in the bill but to declare Local Food Week. That's it. Not only that, despite her eloquence, the reality is that that wasn't even done correctly, that they made a mistake: They named Local Food Week the same week as Agriculture Week—sadly, biting the hand they were trying to shake, biting the farmer's hand they were trying to shake with this bill.

That's the reality of this bill. All it does is declare Local Food Week. It doesn't help the West End Food Co-op in my riding—wonderful local producers and a co-op that brings farmers in. It doesn't help them one iota. It doesn't help anybody one iota. It simply declares a week.

So for all her eloquence, which was marvellous—please keep speaking—this bill does nothing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I want to talk about a couple of companies that I visited in Mississauga. Most people know that I've talked a lot about what a pharmaceutical centre western Mississauga is, what a high-tech manufacturing sector western Mississauga is. But we're also a very large food producer.

I can think of one firm that I visited on a number of occasions, taking a few Ministers of Agriculture there, called Pride Pak. What they do is they take vegetables and put together salad mixes. One of the things that my friends at Pride Pak have pointed out to us is that they have a hard time getting Ontario farmers to grow what it is that they can sell. Part of what this bill does is it tries to connect the people who produce the food with people who are going to process it and get it to market.

For example, Pride Pak is able to supply Wegmans in New York by taking vegetables that it buys in California and out-competing US firms by bringing them across the border, processing them, packaging them, and shipping them back across the border. However, they can't get Loblaw's or Metro or Sobeys or Longo's to buy Canadian. That's one thing that this bill is really going to focus on. When you go into the grocery store and you look at, for example—and I'm going to use this example—next time you're in the grocery store, look at some of those packages of salad mix and see where they come from. They don't come from Ontario, unless you go to a place that you won't normally associate with good Ontario produce, and that's Walmart. Walmart is a big supporter of Ontario farmers. Walmart carries local produce. You know who else does? McDonald's Canada. Both of those really surprised me, but we've got some major US corporations who in fact are bigger advocates than Canadian ones.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to offer a few comments. I think that we all agree that while the notion of

encouraging the production of food in Ontario is a valuable undertaking, this bill falls short by a considerable measure to provide the kind of strength and stability that the agricultural sector needs.

One of the things that is perhaps the most challenging is the question of making sure that the next generation is prepared to become farmers, because of the fact that they look at the manner in which the incredible capital investments that are necessary. When we're talking about tractors that are \$100,000 and things like that, this is a very difficult field—and I use that advisedly—for anyone to get into.

The government fails to recognize in much of its legislation around agriculture that it is the second-biggest economic driver in most parts of the province. You would think that when it provides in so many ways as an economic driver, that it would also demonstrate its appreciation with opportunities for better science and enhanced farming processes to be able to continue to provide Ontarians and others around the world with the very best produce available. So it's in those areas where this bill falls woefully short.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough—Agincourt, you have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the members from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Parkdale-High Park, Mississauga-Streetsville and York-Simcoe for your remarks.

Mr. Speaker, let me remind my colleagues opposite what the purpose of this bill is. It's clearly laid out. But what none of the opposition parties ever talked about to date: The proposed bill is also to strengthen the local food strategy. That includes both legislative and non-legislative components. It also encourages multi-ministries to work together, such as the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Rural Affairs and other ministries, like the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. At the end of the day, this bill is about awareness and education and also supporting the farmers, the producers, the distributors, everybody, in opening the market—Ontario's food market—around the world, around Canada.

So when the opposition party is spending more time being a critic than actually serving Ontario—because this is what it's all about: Which party is best able to serve Ontarians? Because—

Mr. Bill Walker: Us.

Ms. Soo Wong: No. That's not true. I remember how many of you destroyed the farmland.

At the end of the day, we have proposed legislation to help farmers, processors, food producers to expand their current market, and I know what they've done. I've seen the market out in Asia. They're looking forward to partnering with Ontario. So what this proposed legislation is all about is encouraging that open market and further expanding the market.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very thrilled to be given this opportunity I have for this conversation, and I encourage the opposition party to continue to have a conversation, instead of spending time being a critic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm very pleased to stand today on behalf of the agricultural community in my riding of Nipissing to speak to Bill 36, the Local Food Act. I can assure you, Speaker, that our local farmers are every bit as dedicated as any you'll find throughout Ontario.

I'd personally like to thank the local head of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Mark Kunkel; and Klaus Wand, Maurice Schlosser and Michel Champagne, among others who are in regular contact with my office. We continue to discuss various issues the local agricultural sector is concerned with. They are a very proactive group, and I'd like to take this opportunity to commend them for their hard work day in and out.

With respect to Bill 36, my caucus and colleagues and I—we do have some concerns that we hope the Premier will address. Given her track record on transparency with respect to the gas plant scandal, I'd have to say I remain skeptical at this point. But, nonetheless, there is an opportunity here to provide some constructive advice I hope the party opposite will take to heart.

One of the biggest concerns we have is with the plan to replace Ontario Agriculture Week, which holds both tradition and purpose. We do not want Ontario Agriculture Week to be replaced. We believe that Ontario Agriculture Week and Local Food Week should be separate weeks to allow us to recognize both the contribution of our farmers and the importance of local food, including the many people and organizations involved in Ontario's food system.

Secondly, stakeholders and the PC caucus have put forward a number of proposals that would have strengthened our food system, increased access to local food and helped the agriculture sector. We're disappointed that the government has chosen to ignore these initiatives and reintroduce the same weak act as it did last fall.

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Third, Ontario's food system and the agricultural sector are facing a number of challenges, and we are very disappointed that the government has failed to address those in this act. The impact of red tape, hydro increases, and massive eco fees on agricultural tires needs to be addressed, and in some cases reversed entirely.

Before I speak to these points, I'd like to take a moment to discuss the contribution that northern Ontario makes to the province's agricultural sector, which is enormous. I recently had the opportunity—actually, I'll start a little earlier in the story. Some years ago, there was a large group of the Amish community looking to resettle from the northern United States, and they found the most glorious agricultural land in my riding, in Powassan and in Chisholm, Ontario. They had heard there was beautiful agricultural land north of North Bay, and I must admit there is. I know that may come as news to many people here, not thinking about agriculture in northern Ontario, but I'll get to that in a moment. I want to say that the Amish community did settle and have indeed brought many more members of their community

up from the United States. They have truly expanded, to a large extent up and down the Chisholm Line Road and into Powassan, and have really just absolutely changed agriculture in northern Ontario.

I had the opportunity to go a little further north than North Bay, as I mentioned earlier. I went to the New Liskeard Agricultural Research Station with local members of our farm community—again, Mark Kunkel, Klaus Wand and Maurice Schlosser. It was a fascinating tour, and I would like to share some of the interesting facts about the contribution that northern Ontario makes in the province's agricultural sector.

For example, this may come as a complete surprise to you, but fully 50%—half—of all the canola grown in Ontario is indeed grown in northern Ontario, and 20% of all of Ontario's oats are also grown in northern Ontario. From what some of the largest buyers of oats used in the most popular cereals tell us, the best oats that they use are from northern Ontario.

I would also like you to know a couple of other interesting facts. When you buy virus-free seed potatoes in Ontario, every single one of them—100%, every virus-free seed potato grown in Ontario—began in northern Ontario at the New Liskeard research station. When you buy, in the summer, virus-free strawberries, 100% of those virus-free strawberries also began their life in northern Ontario, grown in the New Liskeard research station. These are some interesting little tidbits that I hoped you would appreciate.

Also, let me allow my concern to be shared at this point as well. The previous agriculture minister has given a two-year reprieve on closing the agricultural station and has given us two years to look for private sector partners. I say to the agricultural industry: Let's continue to support the virus-free seed potato and strawberry industry, as 100% of these products come from the north today. Let's continue to support the research on the very specific northern growing conditions, the northern cattle, the 455 cattle that are there in the research division, as well. We need industrial support.

Let me return to the three main points I wanted to talk about. I want to just talk about the provision in Bill 36 that would replace Agriculture Week with Local Food Week. While it's important to recognize local food, we don't believe taking away Ontario Agriculture Week is the solution, so I want you to go to the website respectagriculture.ca and voice your support.

Stakeholders in my caucus have come forward with bold proposals which will strengthen Ontario's agricultural sector. I'm referring to the white paper Respect for Rural Ontario, which provides several paths to prosperity. In particular, path 5 talks about a new Ontario food terminal. We believe there's an opportunity to help our farmers and our processors expand by bringing together more great Ontario food in a new regional food terminal.

This brings me to an additional point with respect to Bill 36, addressing some of the key issues that farmers are struggling with and this government has chosen to

ignore. I'm talking about red tape, regulations that strangle progress and growth in our agricultural sector.

I'm also talking about hydro rate increases. We're facing the more than doubling of your hydro rate on May 1 of this year. That is just absolutely outrageous. It's not just farmers who are struggling with exploding hydro bills; it's all businesses throughout the province of Ontario. I can tell you, as our party's energy critic, the concerns of Ontarian farmers and Ontario's businesses are well known to me. The farmers are amongst those who feel the crushing impact of skyrocketing global adjustment on their bill. In some cases—in fact, almost every case now—that charge is actually larger than the electricity charge on your bill.

Ontario also has a red tape problem, especially in our farms, in our agribusinesses and our food manufacturing industry. There's an astonishing 386,000 regulations that govern our agricultural sector. I want to also talk about a recent survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that found that 68% of farmers said red tape discourages them and their family from growing their business. They also found that 69% of agribusiness owners say red tape significantly reduces productivity in their business.

Last summer our caucus launched an extensive survey of Ontario farmers, and more than three in four told us that red tape was increasing. We heard the same thing in our agribusiness and food processor surveys.

I'll look forward to hearing the comments from the rest of the caucus members and offering my closing two-minute speech. I thank you very much for these 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the comments from the member from Nipissing. I think I'd like to pick up where you sort of dropped off, on the processing issue, because we've heard a lot of good things from this side of the House about this legislation. I'd like to talk about the potential of it, but one of the key things that I've heard, though, is that the government is proud of the exporting record—exporting our fresh fruits and our fresh vegetables out of province for processing, and then we bring them back in. I'd just like to point out what a huge loss of potential jobs—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member prior.

In fact in 2004 Ontario exported approximately \$2.5 million worth of asparagus, and then we imported it back at a cost of \$1.7 million. In 2004 Ontario exported \$93 million worth of tomatoes, and then imported \$31 million back in. So what we're doing is we are growing the best food, best vegetables, best fruits, and then we're sending them out of province and giving jobs to other sectors.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Actually, it's true. It's a trend. But this is a good opportunity to focus on the importance of keeping food local, and there are good reasons to do so—a lot of them, actually. There are environmental

ramifications for over-exporting food outside of the province. It's referred to as redundant trade. It can be seen in the province as a whole.

One example is that we have much higher greenhouse gases emissions than necessary. This is a fallout from over-exporting the good products that we're growing in the province of Ontario. Actually, from the Region of Waterloo Public Health study: one vegetable traveled almost 5,000 kilometres versus a local one at 30 kilometres. The greenhouse gas emissions are obviously higher when you travel. We can do a lot to keep our local food local, processing it here and creating jobs here in the province of Ontario.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to respond on the Local Food Act and the comments by the member from Nipissing. I want to thank him for his comments and perhaps speak just a little bit in the two minutes about my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, which I will say has an incredibly vibrant, diverse and broad-ranging agricultural sector. In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, primarily if you go south and west from Thunder Bay and you get into the rural municipalities that are part of my riding—all over Paipoonge, Neebing, Conmee, O'Connor and Gillies, the little hamlets, Murillo, Kakabeka and the like—you find a very rich and robust agricultural community, with a very long and storied history, I would say.

There are many organizations in my riding that are very excited by this piece of legislation. The Food Action Network in Thunder Bay has been doing great work for a very long period of time—predating the legislation, I would say—dealing with issues around sustainability, nutritional value and food security, doing some great work in our riding. I'm very proud of that organization, the Food Action Network.

When I listen to the member from Nipissing, we have something in common that I'd like to talk about very briefly. I have an agricultural research station in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan as well. I've worked very closely with them, their director and their board since being first elected in 2003, and they do tremendous work.

I can give you briefly, in the little time I have, an example of something that's come directly out of that agriculture research station. For the first time in the history of Ontario, as a result of the research done at our Thunder Bay Agricultural Research Station, last year or the year before—I believe it was last year—for the first time in the history of Ontario, chickpeas were grown in Ontario. Never in southern Ontario, never in Ontario anywhere—in Thunder Bay, in northern Ontario, chickpeas, a great cash crop and a better yield economically for the farmers. Apparently you can't do it in southern Ontario because of the humidity. It's a very important success story on what can happen in all areas of the province when it comes to locally grown food, and a piece that we're very proud of in my riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to follow my colleague from Nipissing who, I believe, shared a lot of good, factual information here today. He really focused on a couple of things that I have to agree with. One of those biggest things—for any business, let alone an agricultural provider—is the cost to do business and the ability for them to actually stay in business, create those jobs on their farm and sell their goods so that they make a living for their family and support their local economy.

Red tape has become enormous—horrendous—under this Liberal government. If they had something in this bill about that, we would have been probably a bit more excited. Electricity: As the critic, these hydro rates that they've actually doubled as of May 1, that has to have a huge negative impact. They always want to talk about the positives; if there were some positives on the other side of the House, I'd be the first person to stand up and applaud them, but it's unfortunate that there isn't a whole lot.

The debt that they have put this province in—every dollar that goes to paying that debt could have been going into something like the agricultural community that would actually create more jobs, create more revenues and actually be a good thing for the province.

The waste of the gas plants: They are going to spend, at the intent of their campaign team, a billion dollars of taxpayer money that, again, could have gone into this, what they're calling a very important industry, and it truly is.

What we'd like to see is some action rather than yet another document that is full of fluffy words, something that says, “may ... establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food.” If they would come out with legislation that would be talking about reducing red tape, lowering energy costs and improving productivity for our great farmers across this province, then we'd be standing here hip-hip-hooraying, we'd be high-fiving them and we'd be behind them 100%. Something as simple as, why would they overlap the existing ag week with Local Food Week? If they are so keen to promote, particularly the part-time ag minister/Premier, why would they not have made two separate weeks to at least get double the promotion, rather than combining them? It just makes no sense to me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. We're in sync: You stand, I stand. We've got good synergy today.

First, I want to say it's extremely important—as many members have mentioned—how relevant the farmers are in our society. There's no disputing that, and they should be given all the recognition that we can, because the work that they do is insurmountable to our livelihood. I want to say that I really have a high regard for farmers, and what they do and what they provide for us.

The other part we talked about that the member just mentioned: jobs. There was an economic impact study

done in Waterloo region. It found that every job in the agriculture sector supports four additional jobs in the local economy, and that each dollar of sales in the agricultural sector generates an extra C\$2.40 in sales and in the local economy. There's the other part of how important agriculture is to our society. They actually generate four times more jobs just by their existence. I just wanted to say thank you to the farmers for all they do for Ontarians and for putting food on our table and making sure that we have access to food.

But as we always say on this side of the House, we can always do better. This bill does have some positives. It opens up the idea that we're talking about a Local Food Act and promoting local food, so we'll give that credit where credit's due. But we still certainly need to strengthen this bill so that it actually makes an impact and so that we see results.

We recognize the hard work that farmers are doing—and making sure we give them the recognition that they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nipissing has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: With nearly 52,000 farms in the province, more than 164,000 Ontario jobs are generated by the farming sector, providing 13% of the value of the rural economy of Ontario's GDP and \$7 billion in wages and salaries. The agricultural sector rivals the auto sector in terms of its economic contribution to Ontario, and that is not something that should be taken lightly.

Earlier, I was talking about some of the critiques that I had, and I wanted to close by talking about the fact that this bill does nothing to address the massive eco fees this government is ready to allow on the tires for agricultural equipment. The new fees classify agricultural tires as off-road, and the rates range from \$5.88 to \$1,311.24 per tire. No other province has fees even close to the level of those in Ontario.

In closing, I hope this government will take some of the suggestions that we've provided, that both myself and our party and other colleagues have provided, and look long and hard at making improvements to this legislation, because, quite simply, our agricultural sector is too important and we cannot let our farmers down.

In the 20 seconds I have left, I want to say it one more time: northern Ontario. I want you to recognize, for our pages, that 50% of all of the canola grown in Ontario is grown in the north, and 20% of all of the oats grown in Ontario are grown in northern Ontario. That's how important this sector is to our community.

Thank you for the two minutes extra, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise to address An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013.

I'm going to talk about the substance of this bill, but I first want to reference that my colleague John Vanthof, from Timiskaming–Cochrane, spoke about this on April 16. I have to say, Speaker, everyone in this House hears a lot of speeches all the time, and unfortunately, we're not

necessarily the best speechmakers the world has ever seen. But occasionally, you come across a speech that's pretty good, that's quite moving; that in fact bears rereading by a lot of people. So I say, if you get a chance to go on the Web: Hansard, Ontario Legislature, John Vanthof, April 16, 2013. It's a good read. It's a very good read.

This bill has some lofty goals and recognizes in its preamble the value of agriculture to Ontario. No question, as the member from North Bay was saying, there is an industry here as big as the auto industry—huge impact on the people of Ontario—an industry fundamental to our existence. No food? No life. It's very, very clear.

This bill, in its preamble, says, "Ontario has robust and resilient local food systems: a highly productive agricultural land base, a favourable climate and water supply...." It goes on to say, "Maintaining and growing Ontario's local and regional food systems requires a shared vision and a collaborative approach that includes working with public sector organizations."

1700

As you go through the preamble and some of the definitions, it's pretty clear that we're talking about an important sector of Ontario's economy; in fact, a very important part of Ontario society. But when you go to the summary of the bill itself, it's effectively proclaiming that we will have a Local Food Week in Ontario. It says that the province or the minister "may" set targets for local food production and consumption, and that the minister "shall prepare a report" about local food activities every three years.

It is not unusual in this Legislature to have bills come forward talking about great and momentous things and then frankly do very little to address them. Unfortunately, this is one of those bills: far grander than the actions that come from the legislation itself.

When my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane spoke about this bill, he spoke about agriculture in northern Ontario. He talked about what was critical to farmers right across this province and to the people of this province who are fed by those farmers.

One of the things he raised that is a pressing issue for farmers is the whole question of standardized packaging. In fact, if packaging is standardized with the United States, the ability for large American agricultural food processors to take our markets and put food into our supermarkets is dramatically changed. He says—and he's very straightforward—this standardization of packaging with the United States is a threat to Heinz in southern Ontario, and is a threat to food processors who employ thousands, whose products are taken from the land of this province, and that is an issue we have to address.

Let me just read some of what he had to say:

"I'd like to take a few minutes and talk about some other legislation that actually does protect local food, and one of those pieces of legislation is federal, but it's worth talking about. The" Canadian Food Inspection Agency "regulates food packaging sizes in Canada. They won't be doing that very much longer if the Conservative

cousins from our people to the right here have their way, because they want to stop that. They want to stop regulation of everything.... I'm not wild about regulation on everything, but there are times when regulation is a good thing. So because we have regulated package sizing in this country, usually it's packaged in Canada and it uses Canadian products to fill those packages....

"Heinz" in Leamington "is threatened because of CFIA, because the Conservatives are cutting regulated package sizing. And it's not just Heinz."

Speaker, if we're actually going to protect agriculture in this province, we have to look at more than simply declaring a week for local food. We actually have to look at the significant issues that are impacting farmers and impacting food processors, and take steps to protect them. It's as simple as that.

There are provincial regulations in place around supply management. There are some joint jurisdiction issues here with the federal government and the provincial government. But in Ontario, according to my good colleague Mr. Vanthof, we regulate what is milk and what is not milk. In Ontario, if you see a package that says "milk," you know it's milk. But other jurisdictions have something called "milk beverage." People think they're buying a product that's milk but that in fact is manufactured, is a fiction in terms of it actually providing the nutrition and nourishment people deserve from that product.

There's no question that farmers need support, that agriculture needs to be boosted in Ontario and that we need to ensure that the thousands who depend on jobs in food processing have comfort and know those jobs are going to be protected. Frankly, we need to go beyond that.

This bill, as written, is very weak. The one utility in having it pass second reading and go to committee is the opportunity to amend it to actually do more than simply proclaim a Local Food Week. A Local Food Week is not a bad thing, but it's an inadequate thing given the scale of issues that we have to deal with, given the scale of concerns that Ontarians have. Mr. Vanthof referred to this bill as largely a very extended press release, a multi-page press release, a press release that talked in glowing terms about agriculture in Ontario and actually did very little for it.

Speaker, if we're going to send this to committee, if we're going to amend it, let's talk about supporting the processing, the cooking of food in our schools. We've got lots of local food. We have students who need to learn how to feed themselves, who need to learn how to cook, and frankly, in a lot of instances, far too many are hungry. We could teach people valuable skills in our schools. We could feed them, and we could support our farmers and food processors. That's something that we need to do.

We need to work with our hospitals, with our universities, with our municipalities to have them develop purchase connections with local agricultural producers, local farmers, so that the food that they're serving is

fresh, local and, because it's not transported right across the continent, generates far less in the way of greenhouse gases when it's moved from one spot to another.

Mr. Vanthof spoke poetically about farmers, but also spoke about the need to go beyond this very simple proclamation, effectively what's here. He found that the bill was lazy. There's a lot of concern about local food, and so the title of the bill is the Local Food Act. It isn't enough to pass a bill with a nice title. What's needed is a framework that will actually move things forward.

This bill is sort of like a puppy: It's cute, it's hard to hate, but it isn't going to get a lot of work done. We need something a lot more robust, something that can pull a sled, something that can do work. This bill, sent to committee, amended tenderly and gently by the majority of this Legislature, actually could do something useful for this province, Speaker. I look forward to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I completely agree with one of the sentiments expressed by my colleague from Toronto–Danforth: Let's get this bill to committee. Let's get it to committee right now.

One of the things that we need this bill to do is to be able to connect local producers with local processors. Earlier, I talked about one of the firms that do packaging in our riding. I remember the founder saying to me that in any given year, he's short—and if I remember correctly, it was 10,000 or 20,000 tonnes of iceberg lettuce. He said, "If people in Ontario grew it, I'd buy it." But he has to buy it from California. Why won't Ontario farmers grow what Ontario processors can turn into extra value-add?

Similarly, one of the things that we found in taking a lot of folks from Mississauga out to farm country is that many of them coming from different countries in the world have said, "You know, we normally have to go back to our country of origin to get"—and they'll rhyme off some of the things that are staples of their diet, and many of them have been surprised to discover that not only can they grow them in Ontario, but they can grow them better in Ontario. I'm actually aware of a number of farms that have worked with some of the different ethnic communities to grow products that may be seeded in southern Asia and are in fact germinated, grown and sold here in Ontario. That's the sort of thing that this act aims to do. That's the way that it connects people who have the land on which you can grow the food with the markets that demand a particular product, and processors who can take the food and turn it into something that can be sold. That is the reason I think my colleague from Toronto–Danforth is correct: We've got to get this bill to committee.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I enjoy getting up talking to the fine member from Toronto–Danforth as he talks about this bill and how he's looking to get it to committee and have some input to it.

I got a call from one of my constituents just a few minutes ago, actually, upset with the Green Energy Act and how it's impacting his area—about the consultation, and it's all over for the solar farms that are going on the road that goes by his property. He's really wondering how this is going ahead without any consultation with the township or himself. He's somewhat surprised as he sees this construction going on.

I said that the worst thing is that I know it's somewhat surprising, seeing it go up and the number of acres that are taken out in construction. He made a comment wondering how anybody could call it green energy when you cut down 100 acres of trees to put up this solar landscape—upset with the issue and somewhat further surprised that—

Interjection: Tree farm?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Well, a woodlot—something that, I think, by most people's standards in this province, is considered green as far as production of oxygen.

I know this government sometimes has no idea of what things cost. I know that sometimes it's cheaper to put a man on the moon—we've heard that from the other side—than to actually worry about—who cares what it costs?

We see that that was the philosophy—who cares what it costs?—when they went through with this Green Energy Act. Now we're starting to pay for it, and we're finding that anybody who can move is moving. Companies are moving to the States; they're moving to Quebec. I guess the US put a man on the moon, and what it cost was not a concern. This Green Energy Act is similar to it. They put this out, and who cared about the cost? But the people of Ontario do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to the comments made by the member from Toronto–Danforth. He definitely has a way with words. He can talk about food; he can talk about the environment; he can talk about energy with great ease.

I'm going to talk a little bit about the education piece he touched on, but I just want to take us back a little bit. This act was actually announced at the international plowing festival, do you remember? It was raining; it was pouring. I guess the government felt it was a good time to make an announcement about food. It was just after the by-election, so people on this side of the House were feeling pretty good. It really did translate well. Talking about local food really resonated very well at that event, and it certainly lifted up the spirits of the people who were there.

I think the member from Toronto–Danforth has accurately pointed out, though, that this piece of legislation does not have a lot of teeth, and we do need to make it better. We need to make it better particularly in one aspect, and that is the connection with education. When I first was a trustee, one of the first school visits I went to was at Lincoln Heights. I went early for the nutrition program. When I got there at 7:15, there were three little

kids waiting to get into the school, because that nutrition program was the only place they were going to get a meal.

We have to remember that being here is a privilege and a responsibility, and we have to make this better. I can understand the defensiveness a little bit, but at the same time, it's incumbent on us to listen to some of the good ideas that are coming forward in this debate. There are good ideas and it can be made better and it needs to be made better, because we have some very serious issues around nutrition, around the quality of food and around the situation farmers find themselves in in this province. The potential is there. We have to make it better, though.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you to the member from Toronto–Danforth for his comments—Kitchener–Waterloo, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. But Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, oh my God. I'm going to give you a bit of a history lesson on what happened to the electricity sector, because you keep talking about electricity in this House. What happened in 1999 when the Conservatives restructured the electricity sector in this province? A \$38.1-billion total debt. When you take out the payments in lieu and other factors, it actually leaves \$20.9 billion that you guys—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the opposition members to come to order.

I return to the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Speaker. So it left \$20.1 billion. At the end of the day, though, \$7.8 billion was put on hydro bills by the Progressive Conservative government at the time, which is still on there as the debt—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to come to order. I have to be able to hear the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and I return to him.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Speaker, but I'm running out of time. They put the debt-retirement charge on there; then they artificially freeze the rates. They cap them. They freeze them. Of course the debt goes up. We're still paying that debt off. That was a decision they made. You wonder why hydro—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the member for Northumberland–Quinte West to come to order. I return to the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and I will give you some extra time because the opposition has interrupted you constantly. Resume.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Speaker. We're still paying the debt-retirement charge. Ontarians are working hard, farmers are working hard, processors are working hard to pay that debt-retirement charge because of a bungled restructuring that your party did, not to mention that you did not invest in the hydro-

electricity system for the whole two terms you were in government. The NDP raised the rates by 40% but made no improvements. We've made considerable improvements to the electricity sector and we're helping all Ontarians, including our farmers.

I don't know why they always take issues regarding the Local Food Act and always turn it around to the Green Energy Act. I think they should remain focused on what we're talking about here. Thank you for the extra time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–Danforth has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I want to thank the members for Mississauga–Streetsville, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Kitchener–Waterloo and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for their comments. This bill is a tough one to discuss at any length, because it's pretty thin; I've got to tell you that right now.

Proclamation of a Local Food Week and the giving of a minister powers that the minister may or may not use to set potential or aspirational targets for local food—you know, it's hard to fill 10 minutes. I'm impressed that my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane was able to speak for an hour. He was able to speak for an hour because he talked about the full range of agricultural issues. He talked about the whole province. He talked about life on the farm, and frankly, he did it in very beautiful and flowing terms. He deserves credit for an excellent speech.

When, in fact, we come forward to talk about it, those of us who live in Toronto, our experience is more limited. We recognize, however, his concern that if we're actually going to protect this huge industry in Ontario, this way of life in Ontario, these essentials for our economy in society, we're going to need a lot more than a Local Food Week.

This bill opens the door to what I hope will be very extensive amendments in committee, an opportunity for great debate, an opportunity to get at building a bridge between rural and urban Ontario, using our schools, our universities, our municipalities and the great talent and resources of rural Ontario to build our economy to a much higher level.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important bill, Bill 36, the Local Food Act. As you know and members know, I represent the downtown urban community of Ottawa Centre. This is a quintessential community in the middle of a city. Today I wanted to bring that perspective to that debate, because too often, I think, the debate I'm hearing is more focused, obviously, on rural communities, on the impact on farmers and farms, which is extremely important. But as a consumer who prefers locally produced goods, I just wanted to bring this important perspective.

1720

I can say that in my community of Ottawa Centre, there is a lot of excitement around the Local Food Act,

because what people in my community want is access to freshly produced local goods. We're talking about baked goods; we're talking about dairy, grocery products, meats, sweets, and even crafts that are made in a local area. There is great demand for it.

One of the great purposes that I see for this particular bill is creating those markets. It's making sure that these goods that are produced locally by our hard-working farmers get to our cities and get to them in a manner such that residents of cities—where most of the people live, Speaker—can have easy access to the locally produced goods, and I see that the Local Food Act can really do that.

Speaking of my community, there is a huge demand—a huge demand—for locally produced goods, and it's demonstrated in that my riding of Ottawa Centre alone hosts, during the whole summer months, four farmers' markets that have nobody from the outside bringing in resale products or anything. These are all goods that are produced locally, or crafts that are made locally, that get sold at these farmers' markets. I want to talk a little bit about them, because I think they're incredible places. I'm there quite often, meeting community members. I've actually sat at community tables at each of these farmers' markets, and these farmers' markets are just packed with local residents who walk by, bring their family to these markets, meet their neighbours and have some coffee along with some locally produced baked goods. It's an amazing community event where the farmers benefit from the local community and the residents are getting access to freshly produced goods.

The Ottawa Farmers' Market, which is made up of farmers—I have three farmers' markets in Ottawa. Two of them are in my riding: one at Brewer Park in Old Ottawa South, and the other is in Byron Linear Park, which is located in Westboro in my riding. The Brewer Park market will be starting on May 5, going to November 17. The farmers' market in Byron Linear Park in Westboro will be starting on May 18, going all the way to October 26. We're excited. We're looking forward to welcoming our farmers from local communities who are coming and selling these locally produced foods.

I really want to take this opportunity to thank the board members of the Ottawa Farmers' Market for their incredible work in bringing these products: Robin Turner, Andy Terauds, Greer Knox, Greg Leese, Walter Henn, Dan O'Brien, Denise Atkinson, Colin Samuels, George Wright, Jocelyn Garland, and the general manager, Linda Cook—all very hard-working people.

The other example of a great farmers' market in my community is the Main Farmers' Market in the Old Ottawa East neighbourhood, in Ottawa Centre. The amazing thing about this farmers' market is that it was started by the community itself. It was not led by farmers. It was led by the community, because they wanted to have an opportunity to buy locally produced foods. They went to the local Saint Paul University and said, "You have this parking lot which is free on the weekends. Can we bring farmers to sell locally produced

foods?"—a great combination of an urban neighbourhood community coming together and inviting farmers. It has been a success since 2007, when it was started as a pilot project by Sustainable Living Ottawa East, which is a local community group that wants to create, obviously, a sustainable way of living for neighbours. This community board-driven farmers' market has become just an incredible success and continues to grow. Again, a big hats-off to my good friends and constituents like Andrea Norquay, Rebecca Aird, Jamie Brougham, Justin Van Dyk, Ashley Deathe, Kurtis Andrews, David Schubert, and the general manager, Greer Knox, for the great work they're doing in growing the Main Farmers' Market. I think it's starting very soon, I believe in May as well, for the whole season, and we're looking forward to it.

Then we've got the Ottawa Parkdale Farmers' Market, which was established in 1927. It has been going on in my community since 1927. It's run by the city of Ottawa, and it has all kinds of produce that is sold, and flowers and plants—again, a very successful farmers' market which starts around late April and goes all the way, actually, to December 24. They actually even sell Christmas trees and Christmas crafts, which is very exciting for members of my community.

A lot of these farmers' markets, Speaker, are supported by Foodland Ontario, by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, by the Trillium Foundation, making it more accessible for the community.

Very quickly, I want to also talk about an organization, Just Food, in my community, which is very much focused on promoting access to local food in our community. They're behind ensuring that we have community gardens in my community. By the way, I've got about three or four different community gardens as well, which I can speak another 10 minutes, easily, on.

But Just Food has been very active in helping shape the Local Food Act, and I'm sure they will be at the committee as well talking about the benefits of local food, and perhaps in fact how it can be even further strengthened. There's nothing wrong in that, in making sure it can be strengthened.

I do want to thank the good people at Just Food for their advocacy in having access to good locally produced foods, people like Cathleen Kneen, Sarah Martin, Dr. Patricia Ballamie, Marissa Bender, Jason Garlough, and staff liaison Elodie Mantha. Moe Garahan, who is the executive director, is a force to be reckoned with. I know the member from Glengary–Prescott–Russell knows she does a lot in terms of advocating access to local food—and the other members of the staff as well for their hard work.

They have a neat program called Savour Ottawa, where they have linked to local restaurants to see if they can create a brand in Ottawa around locally produced goods. Restaurants are now deciding to participate in making sure their menu is made up of locally produced food. The Savour Ottawa sticker goes on the front window of the restaurant, so you know when you walk in a restaurant in my community—be it ByWard Market, in

the riding of Ottawa–Vanier, or in many places in my community like in the Glebe or in Westboro or Wellington West village—that the food you’re purchasing, the great dishes you will be tasting, are produced locally, that the chef has worked with local farmers in getting this produce. It’s a very successful program. Whenever I have tourists who come to town, I always ask them to look for restaurants which are partners of Savour Ottawa, because not only are you supporting local economy, local business, but you’re also supporting local farmers.

These are the kind of activities, Speaker, that really result in ensuring that we have good support for our farmers, who work extremely hard. By having the Local Food Act, which will give even more shape and expression to such ideas as the ones that are happening in my community of Ottawa Centre, I think we will find even greater opportunities for our farmers and, of course, in my case, the hard-working farmers in eastern Ontario.

So I commend the government for bringing the Local Food Act, because I think it’s in the right direction, and from the point of view of an urban riding like mine, we are hungry for locally produced foods. We want those opportunities, be it through our farmers’ markets, be it through our restaurants. We’re looking forward to those opportunities. If this bill can create those markets, can cultivate those opportunities for our farmers and our cities, I think we’re all better off as a province. So I support this legislation, Speaker. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

1730

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I’d like to make comment on the Minister of Labour’s bit on the Local Food Act. I think the basic thing we need to do in this province is to make sure that our farmers are able to produce the product, to get it to a market in order to keep themselves in business, and also make them strong so they can pass it down to their next generation and keep the generations of farms going and make them strong. Ernie Hardeman has put forth a white paper to focus on decreasing costs, decreasing red tape and allowing one-window access for farmers to dealing with government agencies.

I’d like to take a few minutes, though, to talk about my own local area, of course. A very good idea that started in Elgin county with the school system is, a local farmer decided to approach the schools in the fall and, using fresh produce of the fall—potatoes, garlic, peppers, some apples—have the students sell them, a package of locally grown food, as a fundraiser instead of the chocolate bars and chips and such that goes on. It has been very, very beneficial.

I would think the government should take a look—the Minister of Education is here—at that program. Maybe promoting that would be the best way to promote local foods throughout the province. You can do it in late spring, when we have some berries and such growing. You can do it in the fall, when we have the potatoes and root products that are being produced. I think that’s an excellent idea.

I’ll also make a quick comment to the Horton market that’s available in St. Thomas and has been going on for decades. Something my family does every Saturday morning is go and pick our vegetables and fruit for the week during the summer. It’s an excellent time.

It’s also my time, as an MPP, to get the gauge of people in my community. In my own community, I have the president of OFA—I bump into him, time to time. Last year I had the president of the Home Builders’ Association; I had him talking from time to time. I’ve got the president of SWEA. So I make good use—the farmers’ product is actually allowing me to take care of the other aspects of my constituency at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We’re kind of discussing farmers’ markets, and I feel very fortunate in London that we have huge farmers’ markets, an abundance of farmers’ markets, which just goes to show the need for local food in cities. Those farmers’ markets are very well supported by people coming in every week, every weekend. People enjoy Saturday morning, going for breakfast; I know a lot of people do that. They go for breakfast, and then they go to the local farmers’ market and stock up on all the local foods and meats that they have for the week.

I also wanted to talk about, sometimes with food—we’re talking about how great food is and, of course, that’s a given. But there’s people, a lot of time, who are unfortunate and have to use food banks, or they can’t afford food.

I’m going to an event this week coming up; it’s called the Soup and Bread event. It happens at the Covent market, which is in the heart of downtown London. Last year I went to that event, and what they do is they provide food to people who are on social assistance, so they can’t really afford food, or there are people who are actually the homeless. It’s a homeless initiative by the Homeless Coalition in London. People just come in—it’s held outside, rain or shine—and they are able to take home a bag of groceries.

It’s wonderful that we have a local food initiative happening as well, but we seem to forget that we need to make sure that we have everyone be able to afford food and have access to food. So congratulations to the Soup and Bread event for putting that on and to the Covent market for hosting it. I look forward to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I’m pleased to comment on the remarks made by the member from Ottawa Centre and thank him for his remarks. I continue to stand and proudly support a piece of legislation that promotes, educates and brings awareness to locally produced food. I don’t think there’s anything that anybody can say of a negative consequence when it comes to that legislation.

It reminds me: When we were young, it was almost the norm, wasn’t it? We didn’t need legislation supporting this kind of thing. I remember when I was young—I grew up in Port Arthur, before Port Arthur and Fort

William had amalgamated, on Crown Street. We thought it was Little Italy, but it was pretty multicultural. I think one in every two or one in every three people, in their backyard, had their own garden. Everybody just did it. I'm going back to the late 1950s and early 1960s. Everybody had one.

Then, of course, as young people sort of marauding around the neighbourhood, we used to avail ourselves of the opportunities under the cover of darkness that presented themselves. We'd help ourselves to some of the products that were being grown in our neighbourhood. It was interesting that nobody really mattered or got angry at us for what we did, but everybody did it. It was the norm. Now, here we are, a generation or two later, and we feel the need to almost go back and remind people of the importance of something that came so naturally to us one and two generations ago, so it's a good thing.

There's a piece in the legislation that I'm not sure has been talked about today that I'll briefly remark on that I'm excited about. It has the potential for more tangible benefits for our local agricultural communities. That is this piece that speaks to the working relationship and efforts that we will undertake in terms of this \$25,000 number and trying to get local ministries, whether it's a hospital, a long-term-care home or a school board, to work towards trying to procure local food in amounts of \$25,000 and under. I think there are so many examples in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan—fruits and vegetables and beef and our local cheese farm and local flour mills, and on and on it goes—where those local producers would love that opportunity to plug their local products into ministries and actually show a more tangible benefit from what this legislation can actually do.

I'm pleased to have had the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's again a pleasure to stand and address Bill 36 here. But again, the member was making remarks about the importance of farmers' markets, and I wholeheartedly concur. However, we have some great farmers' markets in Northumberland—Quinte West, Mr. Speaker, as I know you're aware of. The fine town of Campbellford has a thriving farmers' market, as do Port Hope, Cobourg and Trenton as well. I know farmers' markets are important avenues or venues to support local farmers and the produce.

On the grand scheme of things, farmers' markets are great, but they can only do so much. This bill doesn't do anything, really, to support local farmers from the standpoint that there are many barriers or restrictions, red tape being a huge amount of that barrier, to allowing farmers to adequately get their products to market in a timely and efficient manner.

I would also like to point out that, as a farmer myself, we see and we can appreciate the idea that rural Ontario is obviously the important economic engine that keeps Ontario going. We need to remind ourselves that.

We have to also remind people, particularly the Liberals across the way here, that Bert Johnson introduced it

and passed the resolution and actually brought in Agriculture Week, the week leading up to Thanksgiving and the week that this government would rather bring in their local food item for. I think it's a great disservice to Mr. Johnson and the hard work that he did.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I return to the Minister of Labour for his reply.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Elgin—Middlesex—London, London—Fanshawe, Thunder Bay—Atikokan and Northumberland—Quinte West for sharing their stories about their local farmers' markets. I enjoyed the debate, because every community is unique. Every community has something interesting in terms of how they are going about supporting local communities, how they're supporting local farmers. It was great to get the flavour, keeping with the food theme here, from everybody.

One of the things that I've been able to do: There's small little entrepreneurs. These two young people in Ottawa, in my riding, actually, in Ottawa Centre, created something called City Crops. What City Crops does is it says that if you have a lot in your backyard, they can borrow it from you to grow some local food. My wife and I have signed up to that, and they come in every week. They've taken a small sliver in our backyard, and they're growing tomatoes and lettuce and all kinds of things. What they do is they give you 25% of the harvest, and the rest of the harvest, 75%, they sell in the local farmers' markets. Here I have, for last two summers, been eating exclusively—our salads for sure are produced right in our own backyard, and there is nothing more delicious than that particular salad. But that's just one example of things people are doing, innovative things. Again, these two young people, I think, were looking for summer jobs. They couldn't, so they came up with this business idea. It's grown. It's really, really grown and I look forward to having them again in my house.

But to know, when I go to a farmers' market, that maybe some of those vegetables were actually grown in my own backyard also makes me feel good and excited.

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The other amazing thing about a farmers' market is not only how the community comes together, but the education you see taking place, where young kids are having conversations with their mom and dad as to where the food is produced and what it means to produce and buy locally. That's what we need to strengthen, and I'm really hoping that all members will support this important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I think it's important, to get started, to go back a little bit. I represent the great riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, which is extremely diverse: very urban in south Kitchener, and very suburban and rural, encompassing the townships of Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich. I'll get into that in just a minute. Before

making my way down to Kitchener, I was born and raised in Mount Forest on, in fact, a family farm. I'll never forget those rural roots that I grew up with.

Some may be shocked to know that I, in fact, was born on a farm, but you know what? I'm very proud of having grown up on a family farm. In fact, my family had a fifth-generation Holstein dairy farm—and my grandfather had a purebred Simmental herd—that I spent many a day on. I remember as a young lad, instead of being inside playing Nintendo games and all these kinds of things, we were outside assisting my grandfather, harvesting acres of potatoes and putting them in the sacks and making my way around Mount Forest, selling them to friends, family, neighbours etc. Those are memories that I'm very fond of and will not forget for a long time.

That also includes raising chickens, catching them at the wee hours in the morning and distributing them throughout our community, and selling halves of beef to our family and friends as well. Those rural roots are something that I'm extremely proud of, and I hope someday my son, too, will have the opportunity to experience some of those agricultural roots that I enjoyed when I was younger.

Getting back to my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, a very diverse riding, as I'd mentioned: I think it's first and foremost important to mention that it's the home of St. Jacobs Farmers' Market, a large market that, in fact, runs all year round and is open Thursdays and Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 3:30. I encourage you to make your way out to St. Jacobs for some fresh produce each and every Thursday, Thursday being the cattle sale at the stockyards. I know my dad still goes most Thursdays and has a few Holstein heifers that he sells there, so he does, but on Saturdays you can go out and get your fresh produce. I encourage you folks to make your way out to St. Jacobs.

Also, Herle's Country Farm Market in St. Agatha: around since 1964, with their specialty in strawberries and sweet corn. I'll be looking forward to that as we near the summer and fall, of course. I wouldn't want to not mention some of our other local produce manufacturers. We're the home of Wellesley apple cider, something I very thoroughly enjoy having in the fridge. I encourage you to stop by there.

Just a few weeks ago, we had the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. Some tens of thousands of people came to Elmira. I know the Speaker wanted to make his way out to the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival that morning but was engaged with some family. But I know he spent many days at the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival and will be back. Driving in that morning, I took a picture and posted it on to Twitter: all the local Mennonite manufacturers of syrup lined up along the way to sell their product, and I know many people on their way in grabbed some local maple syrup for this spring. It's something that we enjoy every Saturday morning: pancakes and syrup—real maple syrup, that is.

Martin's Family Fruit apple farm in Elmira—can't miss that one—and of course, Mountainoak Cheese; they had a grand opening just recently—some great local

manufacturers of food and producers of food that are distributed across Ontario and, in fact, North America come from the great riding of Kitchener—Conestoga.

I'd like to spend what little time is left today on the Local Food Act. I know when I go to the grocery store, as many of you—we all have the intention of buying local food. I must commend some of our local stores. I know I heard some comments from the third party about larger grocery chains that don't have local food. When I go to my local Zehrs, I always see Wellesley apple cider there and a lot of local produce that I can get, but I do know that a better job could be done. In fact, the government has a role in this when it comes to schools, universities, colleges and hospitals. They account for hundreds of millions of dollars in food purchases annually, and we need to ensure that those large public sector institutions are in fact encouraged to buy local and buy Ontario food.

So, getting to the bill, unfortunately, I do believe, though, that this Local Food Act really simply is a public relations play that the Liberals have put forward here. I read some comments that were made by the former minister after he introduced this bill, talking about allowing the minister to establish targets. In fact, the reporter asked what targets those were and I'll quote what he had said: "Well, we want to encourage the broader public sector and those that we fund directly to look at their food use, look at how they can add more Ontario-made products and get them committed enough to do that. Then they would begin to measure the results and ideally set targets for themselves," and so on and so on.

He continues to explain how those targets will be set by a group after the bill is passed and that in order for the targets to be made the bill must pass, but he really fails to say what those targets were ahead of time. So, I think the common theme that we hear today is, really, what are those targets? Since the government, in fact, reintroduced the bill, farmers, food processors and agricultural groups were really looking forward to seeing their recommendations. I reference the OFA, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, FoodShare—the list goes on and on—about developing a sustainable local food system.

As I had mentioned, Ontarians, whether they're here in Toronto, in my community of Kitchener or in rural Ontario, all have the intent of going out to the grocery store to ensure that they're buying local. But it goes back to a lot of the things that we in fact have heard over the course of the last year and a half. In fact, our critic, Ernie Hardeman, was out heavily consulting in round tables and has recently put forward a white paper, Respect for Rural Ontario, that talked a lot about the struggles our farmers are going through today.

What was mentioned earlier on by our critic, Vic Fedeli, just simply the tire eco tax—I will go back to it because those are costs that unfortunately have to be passed on that make local food more expensive. These folks have to compete in a global marketplace. When the godfather of eco tax, Dalton McGuinty, allows his

cabinet to continue to bring these programs forward and hit farmers with a 2,000% increase just on farm tractors alone, that simply puts them out of the picture. You've got a John Deere combine tire, for example—it used to cost 92 bucks a tire; now it's \$1,644. I mean, spread that over a farmer's crop for the year, and that's extremely expensive.

So, we go on and talk about red tape that farmers are bogged down in. In fact, in a survey done of farmers, 77% of them said that red tape is increasing here in Ontario and that the average farmer spends about 154 hours a year just filling out government paperwork. I know, when I was younger, the better time was spent in the barn and in the field, ensuring that those crops were maintained and that chores were being done, that the cows were being milked in the morning and in the afternoon, not on some bureaucratic binder full of paperwork that needs to be done each and every day. That's simply what our government is bogging down our farmers in. In fact, we've made a strong commitment that we would reduce this red tape by a minimum of 33% in three years, as outlined in Ernie Hardeman's white paper.

I know I've only got about a minute left, so I'll just go back simply to thank the farmers in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga. I've highlighted many of them who ensure quality, local, good produce is available for our community day in and day out.

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I encourage everyone to get over for the St. Jacobs farmers' markets on Thursday from 7 to 3:30 and on Saturdays as well. Make your way up to Herrle's market. I'm looking forward to their strawberries and sweet corn in the fall. Get some of that Wellesley apple cider in the fall. If you missed the pancakes at the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival, a local maple syrup festival in Elmira, I encourage you to get out there next year. Whether you're eating a Chudleigh's apple pie or an apple crisp from Martin's family fruits or Mountainoak cheese, you'll think of Kitchener—Conestoga.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We've debated this bill for quite some time, and it's interesting to hear some of the comments from my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga. Our general region of Waterloo really does rely on the farmers from the communities surrounding. The connection between the cities and the rural has to be strengthened, and I don't think that this bill, quite frankly, does anything to do that, although some comments have indicated that it will.

I think it's really important to go back to the fact that there really isn't a vision for agriculture in the province of Ontario, and it's concerning. One of the disconnects, actually, is the lack of support in the education system, which would encourage and which would direct and support students moving into the agriculture sector. Certainly, a growing concern in the province of Ontario, which is directly connected to the health of the children

in our school system, has to do with their disconnect from food. For them to go and visit a farm—those are the kinds of experiential learning opportunities that we need to grow and build on.

There is this one organization in Toronto called Real Food for Real Kids, and it seeks to actually connect farmers with a nutrition program. It's a hot lunch program. It's organic. Kids actually understand the connection with the food that they're eating. It's all vegetarian. In fact, that program actually builds in additional resources so that those kids in the school who don't have enough money to have the hot lunch program get access to nutrition.

The potential on this side of the House to build this into this bill is definitely there. It is certainly our intention to do so. It needs to be better. It needs to be stronger. We look forward to essentially rebuilding it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to take a slightly different tack. When we started debating this bill earlier today, according to Hansard, we had spent seven hours and two minutes on this bill. We now have spent four hours here this afternoon, which means that on a relatively simple bill that everybody agrees with, we have spent 11 hours. I'm sure the people out in television land must be wondering what is with these people on all sides of the House.

What's going on here is a modern version of the filibuster. A filibuster basically is that every member in the House is allowed 10 minutes to speak—some 20, some an hour, if you're the critic etc.—and the opposition simply wants the business of this House to come to a total standstill. That standstill will happen because if you look collectively at all of the opposition members, we can keep this going for 20 to 25 hours. That's what's going on here.

It happened last week with respect to another bill. They put exactly the same period of time and it only came to a vote—I think it dealt with the ambulance situation here in Ontario—after 25 hours of debate. The people of Ontario demand better.

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You can shout all you want, but they would demand better of everyone here. So stop your foolishness. Let this bill pass. Let us go on for second reading. There are all sorts of other bills on the agenda here that we could be talking about that could be dealing with a lot of the other problems that the people of Ontario have.

Opposition members of the NDP and the opposition Tories, this is nonsense. Stop filibustering this bill. Let it pass. Let it go to committee. Let's get on to something else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: On a more positive note, the member for Kitchener—Conestoga—he's been the member for a year and a half now; he does an excellent job up there. As he described, he has a diverse riding: urban,

suburban—I think much of the Mennonite country up that way. He has a reputation for keeping them honest and keeping them accountable. In fact, he even introduced legislation to that effect. He introduced a private member's bill to bring in some transparency with respect to legislation coming from this government, so at least we know the cost—not only the financial cost, the social cost, but the environmental cost, for that matter.

As we know, Michael was born on a farm. He wheeled into the plowing match last fall on a big, new Holland “Big Blue” tractor. A fifth-generation farm—Simmentals, and growing potatoes, selling potatoes; chickens, selling chickens, catching chickens. You can catch them and you can grow them, but the hard part is selling them.

He talked about strawberries. I don't know if he talked about blackberries, but he talked about strawberries. He made mention of strawberries. And his dad, to this day, sells heifers at the St. Jacobs market.

I'm glad he made mention of peanuts. My riding ships peanuts up to St. Jacobs. We ship them to Elgin. We ship them down to Niagara, at the retail end of it.

Michael is our environment critic. I think every farmer and every farm dealership in Ontario knows the work that he's been doing with respect to these horrendous taxes.

He made mention of the John Deere 9770 combine. To replace the tires, the tax alone would be \$1,600. That's twice what I paid for my last tractor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? I'll return to the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Harris: I know the folks at home watching will want to see my final remarks with regard to this bill.

I'd like to thank the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, my neighbour; obviously, my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk—I thank you for your comments; and also the member for Kingston. I will just address some of the

comments he made, because I really do believe some of the comments were a bit rich, I might add.

I know that talking about all this food today has made the member from Kingston awfully hungry, and I know he's in a rush to get out of here to down some of that locally grown Ontario produce and perhaps beef, or whatever. You know what? He is looking a bit hungry, must add.

But you know what? To talk about the fact that I, as a member, can't stand up and talk about the Local Food Act and talk about comments that I've heard from local farmers, local producers that I mentioned, I really do believe is a bit rich, especially when his government last fall, after tabling this bill, pulled the plug on the democratic process to begin with and cynically prorogued the House because the heat got too hot in the oven—pardon the pun. It got too hot, because there was too much attention on what we now know could lead to a billion-dollar scandal on power plants—pulled the plug.

We couldn't get this bill through the first time. It's a bit like Groundhog Day, now talking about the bill again, because it's back for its second time, but only because his government cynically pulled the plug. Dalton McGuinty couldn't face the criticism and the heat that he was getting here in the Legislature, so he pulled the plug and pulled debate on a variety of bills that are simply just a smokescreen to allow the government to talk about local food when there really isn't any substance, and take away from really the true scandal, and that's the power plants, so—

Hon. John Gerretsen: I think it's 6 of the clock.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is indeed 6 of the clock, and this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Windsor–Tecumseh	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Dipika Damerla, Steven Del Duca
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Monte McNaughton
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Bas Balkissoon, Rick Bartolucci
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Mike Colle, Rosario Marchese
Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day (pro tem.)

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Laura Albanese, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Joe Dickson, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Paul Miller
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Teresa J. Armstrong
Steven Del Duca, Bob Delaney
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Gilles Bisson
Steve Clark, Mike Colle
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Dipika Damerla
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Margaret R. Best, Vic Dhillon
Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Margaret R. Best
Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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